



*The Hedgerow*

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# SOUTHWARD HO!

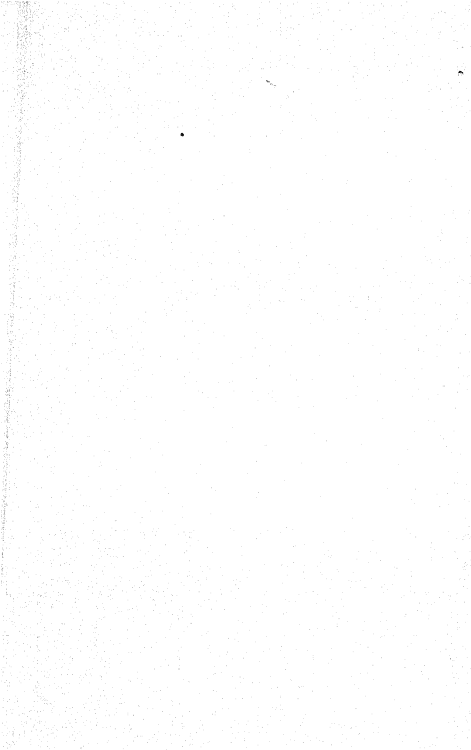
And other Essays

*Gift from the  
Dante*



Holbrook Jackson





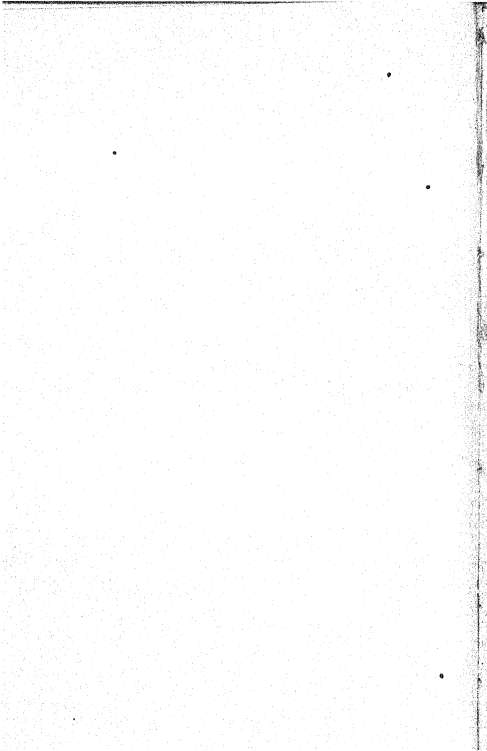


## NOTE

THE Essays included in this volume are, in the main, selected from my two earlier volumes *Romance and Reality* and *All Manner of Folk*. They have been revised, and to their number I have added four essays which have not yet appeared in book form.

H. J.





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## SOUTHWARD HO! AND OTHER ESSAYS

### I

## SOUTHWARD HO !

### I

THOSE who remember Liverpool before the multi-domed Dock Offices and the sky-scraper of the Royal Liver Insurance Company flaunted themselves on the pier-head, overtopping the tallest spars of the fleetest barques of the South Sea trade, and making even the colossal red funnels of the *Mauretania* look like toys, will remember also the St. George's Dock. And if they are further companioned by a sentimental regard for old familiar things, as which of us is not, they will no doubt resent somewhat the intrusion of those arrogant monsters of iron and stone, modern hybrids of building construction, half engineering and half architecture, usurping the place of that same old rectangular basin of muddy green water. For do they not stand precisely where it once stood?

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Are they not the monstrous gravestones of the cosiest dock in the whole world?

Well, it was in this dock, in the corner beside the swing bridge which used to connect James Street with Mann Island, in the shadow of the Goree Piazzas, that I first beheld the craft which afterwards took me to the South Seas. I was just out of my teens and had come over the water from the Cheshire side and was crossing from Mann Island into the City of Ships. I had passed the hut where the ancient gentleman sold cheap Bibles and Testaments and other accounts of the True Faith, and stood turning over the battered volumes on the stall of the second-hand bookseller, which at that time stood in a row of stalls, most of which displayed glowing pyramids of oranges and apples presided over by plump old dames with immobile, wind-tanned faces, who seemed to do nothing but sit staring all day at the pleasant row of sailors' dram-shops opposite. Even in those days I had a keen scent for a good book, and almost the first I touched on the stall was a musty copy of "Typee," by Herman Melville. I had never heard of it before, but was attracted by the name. "Typee," I murmured, "Typee suggests something childlike and exotic," and turning over the pages I came across this passage:

"There were none of those thousand sources of irritation that the ingenuity of civilised man has created to mar his own felicity. There were no foreclosures of mortgages, no protested notes, no bills payable, no debts of honour, in Typee; no

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unreasonable tailors and shoemakers, perversely bent on being paid; no duns of any description; no assault and battery attorneys, to foment discord, backing their clients up to a quarrel, and then knocking their heads together; no poor relations everlastingly occupying the spare bed-chamber, and diminishing the elbow-room at the family table; no destitute widows with their children starving on the cold charities of the world; no beggars; no debtors' prison; no proud and hard-hearted nabobs in Typee; or, to sum up all in one word—no money! That 'root of all evil' was not to be found in the valley."

"A sort of Socialist Utopia," I thought, and dipped again. I caught this the second time:

"To begin with the morning. We were not very early risers—the sun would be shooting his golden spikes above the Kappar mountains ere I drew aside my tappa robe, and, girding my long tunic about my waist, sallied out with Fayaway and Kory-Kory and the rest of the household, and bent my steps towards the stream. Here we found congregated all those who dwelt in our section of the valley; and here we bathed with them. The fresh morning air and cool flowing waters put both soul and body in a glow, and after a half-hour employed in this recreation, we sauntered back to the house—Tinor and Marheyo gathering dry sticks by the way for firewood; some of the young men laying the cocoa-nut trees under contribution, as they passed beneath them; while Kory-Kory played his outlandish pranks

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for my particular diversion, and Fayaway and I, not arm-in-arm, to be sure, but sometimes hand-in-hand, strolled along, with feelings of perfect charity for all the world, and especially good-will towards each other."

"How much?" I inquired of the patient merchant.

"Threepence," said he.

As I crossed the swing bridge I saw, lying in her accustomed berth, the schooner *Eostre*, as I had seen her many times on her periodical visits, for this corner berth seemed hers by historic right, like the berths of the Dutch Eel-Schuyts in the Pool of London by Billingsgate Wharf. She looked just the same as ever, neither older nor younger, indeed she had reached that age when time seems to pass by unheeding and unheeded, as is often the case with hearty old women. Her grey mainsail flapped loosely and untidily, with its square brown patch in the right-hand corner, as it always did when she was in dock; and her blue-jerseyed crew were disembarking her familiar cargo of bundles of boardlike salted fish. Her sides, as usual, were almost guiltless of paint, and inclined to portliness; they bulged, unnaturally for a schooner, from a square stern, on which was painted in yellow letters on a blue ground, "*Eostre—Christiania*," but they made amends by tapering rather gracefully to the bows, from which a new jib shot out with obvious coquetry. I recrossed the bridge late that evening with "Typee" in my pocket, which I had been devour-

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ing all the afternoon at the risk of commercial disaster in a fragrant smoking café, and on my way to the pier-head, I had bought at a bookshop "Omoo," which, I learned from the title-page of "Typee," was by the same author. The *Eostre* still lay at her berth, but a light now shone into the twilight from her binnacle, and only one of her crew was in sight; he leaned over the star-board side meditatively watching the traffic on Mann Island, puffing a pipe and spitting into the dock. That night I went to bed early, propped myself up with pillows, placed the light in a convenient position, read "Typee" to the end and "Omoo" half through before the guttering of the candle forced me to close my smarting eyes on the glories of the South Seas.

### II

Doubtless there are people who, having read "Typee," are not moved with an urgent desire to take ship for the Marquesas, but I have yet to hear of them. But there can be none in the early twenties who are so tame. Anyhow I was not of their number. I had barely got half through the book when the South Seas filled my imagination with an overpowering longing. I seemed to have known them all my life; Herman Melville, most delightful and discursive of chroniclers, simply relit my memory. He made it all quite clear and revealed my destiny. My longing was no vague desire for novelty, it was simply homesickness.



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It all came back to me in the café between the dream-pauses of my reading; I felt like a foreigner whose mind constantly harked back homewards. Vision after vision of the luscious archipelagoes of Polynesia flashed across my mind. My thoughts were a perpetual cinematograph of lagooned islands in wine-deep seas; of palm-trees rising above the eternal surf of the endless Pacific; of forests garlanded with flowers; of palm-leaf houses, cocoanuts, yams, bananas, and bread-fruit; of lithe men beautifully tattooed in strange arabesques of blue and green and red; and of olive women with red, laughing mouths and bright, soft eyes—a cleanly, idle, gentle folk, who did nothing in the world but live, rounding off their perfect days by occasionally eating one another.

### III

There are several ways of going to the South Seas. You may travel over the great antipodean ferries in floating hotels, from London or Liverpool, through the Mediterranean and the Suez Canal, the Red Sea, and the Indian Ocean, or round the Cape of Good Hope. Or you may cross over the Atlantic Ferry to New York, from thence going overland to San Francisco, where you may again ship comfortably. Or, better, you may take the old route of the navigators round the Horn, meeting the icy gales, smelling the Antarctic almost, as a vantage and a standard for future

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contrasts, when the good ship turns her nose up to the Line. That way went I; but in no ocean-going Savoy or Carlton. I roughed it deliciously in the *Eostre*, who, as long as I could remember, had been beating the channels of the British archipelago, exchanging at Christiania and Liverpool cargoes of dried fish and the factored goods of Lancashire and Yorkshire.

### IV

Southward Ho! What greater joy than in those words! Down the Mersey we tacked on a high tide; and I watched with riotous glee the towers and domes of the great city fade behind us. The river tossed and tumbled, scattering spindrift like confetti of silver. Over towards the North Fort we sped, peeped into the mouths of the big guns, and with a fluttering of patched sails, tacked and scurried across towards the Perch Rock Battery, bidding adieu as it were to the watch-dogs of Liverpool, and so out into the Channel; and I turned and saw old England dissolve itself into the nothing it had become for me. Rio first; then, in an heroic curve, we tacked down to the Plate, glimpsed into Buenos Ayres for water and fresh meat, and off round the Horn on swift mysterious wings. No storm checked the little weather-ripened *Eostre*. It was like a dream, I kept saying, and our tiny schooner, bearing the name of a goddess, fore and aft, was a ship o' dreams. I sprang on to her prow as we rounded

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the historic cape, and looked ecstatically at the Queen of Oceans. There before me she lay, league after shimmering league, incalculable, illimitable, invincible, wearing, as I knew, over her heart, the clustered jewels of the Marquesas.

It was Northward Ho! now, but northward in the rich South Seas. Flying-fish leaped out of the blue-green swell before us, as if the *Eostre* were a faery boat and they her steeds; and behind floated a milk-white albatross . . . . The ghostly ocean-bird took a fancy to us outside the Rio Plata and never left us till we sighted our Hesperides. Ever and anon Leviathan rose out of the deep in the vast arena of ocean through which we sailed, coming into existence like a phantom island, spouting aloft a cascade of spray which would have put the fountains of Versailles to shame, and then, beating the Pacific with monstrous horizontal tail, was gone to reveal, anon, his slate-grey form a dozen miles away.

These were the incidents of our voyage, the "sights" of the ocean. These and the eternal memories of the great navigators, Cook, Vancouver, Cabot, and the rest, and best of all, Mendaña, who discovered the Marquesas. They were no longer memories, however, but realities. The South Seas are theirs, their ships surrounded us, a motley flotilla of all ages, beckoning, speeding, hailing our ship o' dreams. Presently we sped along those highways of the southern ocean, the Trade Winds. With all sails spread we were

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hurled by the great forces, day after day, into the tropical heat, as if we were sailing into the sun; night after starry night, with the Southern Cross above and strange constellations dancing and singing around us. And then, lo! a mystery! The air was transfigured! Not alone the salt breath of the mighty ocean Queen, but a warm fragrance to which the salt was but savour. All the gardens of the Riviera and Surrey, Tyrol in spring, England in Maytime, distilled into one voluptuous scent, and steeped in odours new and strange. No land in sight; nothing but the encircling sea, the flying-fish, the albatross, the big whales, and the swift glancing of the shark. But we knew what it was. It was the Marquesas calling to us; it was the spirit of Typee, the home of Fayaway, it was the voice of the Syrens distilled into a magical fragrance, greeting the *Eostre*.

Presently they rose out of the ocean. A huddle of purple hills in the sea; and as we drew near they changed colour with every league, as though they signalled us. Purple, mauve, blue, green, opal, mother-of-pearl. Then they assumed form and detail. Forests running up the sides of mountains; deep valleys, luscious and dark. Nearer still we came, with eyes, ears, nostrils strained to meet them. I saw, heard, smelt the wonderland. Curves of roaring surf; air like that of a Yorkshire moor; and a palisade of palms, leaning towards the lagoon or holding aloft their feathered heads like noble dames. We did not put into the larger islands of Hivaoa or Nukahiva,

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but sallied farther north to the cluster of islets of the Washington Group where the natives are less affected by the customs of their French masters.

### v

And at length the voyage ended. A little island was our destination; it stood on the very frontier of the Marquesas, rising out of the sea as easily as Leviathan, but permanently and beautifully. Perhaps they knew I was coming, I could have believed anything of the Marquesans. They guessed it was no mere trader, no potential beach-comber, but me, the Marquesan, lost in the great universe, exiled through countless incarnations, homing at last! It was a mystery and they understood. Anyhow they came out to meet us. Outside the reef the sea was populous with canoes, some few with lateen sails, but most of them propelled by paddles. We sailed slowly through them like a monarch through her courtiers. I noted how the carved bows of the canoes were newly painted in bright dyes, and how nearly all were decked with leaves and flowers. Slowly we glided through the doorway of the reef into the still chrysoprase of the lagoon, the canoes following, and the water about us full of swimming youths and maidens. Diving, floating, splashing, laughing, they encircled the *Eostre*, like irresponsible angels who had somehow got into a misplaced heaven, or a rightly placed one for all I knew. I watched their mad capers. Marvel-

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lously active they were, darting under the surface like fish, their lithe bodies flashing like polished shagreen, the long dark hair of the girls streaming behind them as they rushed along, or curling about them as they turned and rose, laughing, with flashing teeth.

Then with a rattle of chains the anchor dropped to the coral bed of the lagoon; I descended into a waiting canoe and was paddled swiftly ashore. Surrounded by joyous and inquisitive crowds, men graceful and symmetrical, some bearded and their beards plaited, or cut short and square and pointed, smooth limbed, easy of carriage, briefly clad. Women in loose white tappa robes revealing here and there glimpses of olive bodies which they declared with the frankness such beauty deserved; hair long, straight, and dark, and into the tresses were woven the scarlet flowers of the hybiscus, which contrasted delightfully with full, dark eyes, smiling with the vital smiles of superb health and natural joy.

### VI

So I was there at last. I looked around me at the forests which came down to the beach, at the cocoa-palms, at the little tent-like houses of bamboo thatched with palmetto leaves; and as I walked along to the chief's house, I noted the colour of the woods. They were not green, like the woods of England, but rainbow-hued; the very shadows were painted like the wings of a

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butterfly. All the trees seemed linked together with garlands of flowers. Strange birds sang and hopped and fluttered before me. Insects of metallic lustre sported in the sun. The bamboos rattled on either hand, and the Marquesans laughed and shouted; some ran and jumped; others gathered bread-fruit and cocoa-nuts; some spanked each other with long palmetto leaves. I saw no signs of work, nothing but idleness and play. I sighed out of very joy; here I was at last, free for ever of the fever and fret of England where one puts on clothes because of the cold, where one works because one must, and hypocritically says one likes it; I laughed joyfully with the Marquesans. I could have embraced them all, I was so happy. As we neared the big house of the chief on the hill-side, raised on its pi-pi of stones, another crowd ran to meet us; they scattered flowers as they came, and ahead of them sped the most beautiful damsel of them all. Quickly they came on, and straight she made for me. At first I felt nervous. Then, as she drew nearer, I seemed to recognise her. It was Fayaway, the beautiful Fayaway of Typee, Herman Melville's lovely savage. She approached, laughing, panting, in a shower of flowers, laid two soft hands in mine, held up her red lips—and then, then, as they say, I woke up.

## II

### HERE AND NOW

I LIKE to do nothing. To sit by a fire in winter, or in a garden in summer; to loaf on a sea-beach with the sun on me; to hang over the wall of a pier-head and watch the waves in their green and white tantrums; to sit in a brasserie on a Parisian boulevard with a common bock, and the people moving to and fro; to idle in parks or public squares, or in the quadrangles and closes of colleges, or the Inns of Court, or the great cathedrals; to forget haste and effort in old empty churches, or drowsy taverns; to rest by a roadside hedge, or in a churchyard where sheep browse; to lie in a punt in the green shade of the willows; to sit on a fence—these things please me well.

My love of doing nothing is deep-rooted: so deep-rooted that I have never thought it necessary to argue about it; besides, there are so many people arguing about so many things. And I am not vain; I desire not to convert. Who, indeed, shall say to what faith one ought to be converted! Faith and faithfulness, to be sure, are often separated in our time, and my private opinion is that the convertible are already converted.

Of course I work—but I make no virtue of that. I work because I must. I do not make the admission to invite your sympathy. Even were I rich I might do something, just to give a relish to my real



## Here and Now

aim in life. . . . As it is, I work to provide a margin to my days, a margin in which I may "taste the vaguely sweet content of perfect sloth in limb and brain."

I know there are people who like work, and I am bound to respect their taste; but I do not in the least understand them. They do tease me out of thought, as doth Eternity; and I am silent before them as Keats was before a greater thing. There are many things we are forced to accept with our limited perceptions; we understand very little in spite of our hurrying here and there, and of our vast knowledge. Doubtless work has rewards unknown to me: my powers of observation may be faulty, for most people seem to be working all their waking hours; they do nothing only when they sleep, afterwards they begin to work again. I must conclude that they get some pleasure out of it, or they would not work, for we all agree that ours is an age of freedom. It behoves me, therefore, to take the inveterate worker for granted.

Still I am often tempted to look more deeply into the phenomenon of work, because if the love of work in some moves me to silence, surely the inclusion of work among the rights of man ought to move me to tears—or laughter. But I shall neither weep nor smile nor pursue the matter further, for I am unworthy. One cannot properly understand a subject unless one comes to it with sympathy; and I have no sympathy for work. I do not hold it among the virtues.

I would be better employed in considering, nay,

## Here and Now

in emulating the lilies of the field, who have confounded the wisdom of those who toil from the beginning of time. Why, I often ask myself, why has this not been generally accepted? And in my effort to answer the question, I am forced to admit that it has been generally accepted, though not generally admitted. And, after all, I may not be alone in my faith: perhaps the majority are with me, only some perverse tradition prevents them from avowing it. I am, indeed, quite satisfied that

" Hearts just as pure and fair  
Do beat in Belgrave Square  
As in the lowly air  
Of Seven Dials! "

The whole matter, however, is a mystery, for I find that Seven Dials, using the term as the symbol of a place where work is the sole occupation, is always working, without any very obvious enthusiasm for the performance; whilst Belgrave Square, using the term as the symbol of a place where work is not the sole occupation, manages to combine an elegant idleness with a remarkable moral enthusiasm for work. The solution of the riddle would require more subtlety than I can command; it would be merely a vain begging of the question were I to charge either with insincerity or folly, especially in the light of the known honour and sincerity of our leisured classes and that shrewdness and almost touching self-interest which are the traditional characteristics of the workers.

## Here and Now

The matter is further complicated by the curious fact, common to the most superficial observer, that Seven Dials is no more consistent in its calling than Belgrave Square; for just as the latter can find time in its idleness to sing the praises of work, so Seven Dials reserves its highest praise, and its highest rewards for those who do no work. Human beings are strange creatures; they pride themselves upon being distinguishable from what they call "the lower animals" by possessing the faculty of reason, yet they remain superbly unreasonable. Still, in the last resort, there is one consistency between the two forces: the practice of Belgrave Square and the taste of Seven Dials coincide, thus proving that idleness, either voluntary or enforced, is a link, and perhaps the only link, between rich and poor.

Perhaps on this basis a truce might be called in which each might be allowed to follow his own inclinations. We might call it—a Pragmatic Sanction for Idleness. Unless some such agreement is arranged, I greatly fear that rich and poor may do something to each other which they will eternally regret. Their inconsistencies may make slaves of them all. This would not matter so much if we who prefer to do nothing were left out of it, but that would be impossible, for slavery is both infectious and contagious, and sooner or later it afflicts every citizen in those States where it has gained a footing. We are threatened with the disease even now, and I think it would be far from unwise if our legislators considered means of

## Here and Now

arranging for the quarantine of all who were suspected of the taint.

But I do not wish to follow a question which for the moment does not affect me. I am fortunately placed. The gods have been kind to me. They have permitted me to do just sufficient work, and then to loaf, to dream, to do nothing! For this boon I should give praise every moment of my life; and I do—for is not appreciation praise? Hours of voluntary idleness are indeed hours of praise. For in such hours we are in communion with the real world; in them we have done with the time that passeth away, and become one with the time which is eternal. The priests of old knew this when they instructed their acolytes in the art of meditation. Walt Whitman knew it when he loafed on "fish-shaped Paumanok" observing a spear of summer grass; Thoreau knew it in his hut by Walden Pond; William Blake knew it when he saw the angels on Peckham Rye.

It is only when life is overwrought with the tyranny of doing that we miss the joy of being; and it is only the consciousness of being that makes us capable of any worthy action. That is why the great ones of the earth have always been men of a wide leisure, men who have had a margin to their days, like the margin about the page of a well-built book. The men who do anything worth doing are just the men it is easiest to catch doing nothing. But I did not set out even to make a virtue of doing nothing. Virtues are to the virtuous; and it may be that some of us are

## Here and Now

unworthy of work as others are so obviously unworthy of idleness.

One cannot settle such questions; they must be left to settle themselves. So I end as I began. I like doing nothing, and the one who likes doing nothing has time to appreciate everything—even time. He is at one with the long silences; kin with the world. . . .

### III

## GOING TO NOWHERE

I WAS walking along a familiar English highroad, when the sound of wheels caused me to move unconsciously to the greensward on the right. Presently a friend in a dogcart appeared. "Hello!" he said, with good-humour, "where are you going?" "To Nowhere," I replied cheerfully. "Oh, thought you'd like a lift," said he, whipping up his mare and getting away rapidly. He no doubt concluded I was in a churlish mood. But I was never less churlish nor more truthful. I was actually going to Nowhere, and that my admission of the fact could excite ill-feeling is a curious reflection upon our times.

But a moment's thought and the matter becomes quite clear. This is an age in which everybody is going Somewhere, and Nowhere, as a destination, has become a term of evasion. You say you are going Nowhere to the over-curious, the inquisitive, and the word, used in this sense, means just the opposite. It is a piece of protective irony, and thus a product of the modern convention of purposeful gadding about.

The man who is not going Somewhere nowadays is very rare indeed. The habit is rapidly becoming an instinct. I hardly ever meet people who are not going Somewhere; or if they are not actually doing so it is merely because circum-

## Going to Nowhere

stances are against them; they have work to do, money to earn, masters to serve, homes to support. As it is they devote their spare moments to planning journeys to remote places for the holidays. Journeying has become a part of the ritual of life. The wedding trip is as much a circumstance of getting married as the honeymoon used to be; and you no longer hear of merchants retiring from business and taking things easily; they retire from business, nowadays, to devote themselves to travel. This journeying is always, as I say, purposeful; people are always going Somewhere; and, just as the act of going Somewhere has become a kind of social ritual, so certain places have become the symbols and impedimenta of the ritual. Their names are adorably familiar to all purposeful travellers—Florence and Rome; the Bernese Oberland and the Trossachs; parts of Holland, Belgium, France; Cairo, Morocco, the Land of the Midnight Sun (*vide* Guide-Books), and even, for the extra wealthy, Japan. It is a far-flung list, but yet a narrow one, for the ritual of going Somewhere, or, to give it its real name, the art of the tourist, imposes upon you the necessity of keeping on the beaten track. Somewhere is a place to which everybody has been or “ought” to go; it has been written about, praised, defined.

Now when I say that I prefer going to Nowhere, I would not have you jump to the conclusion that I am a contrary person. Were you to do so you would do me an injustice. Nowhere is simply my favourite destination, and I get so much pleasure

## Going to Nowhere

out of going there, that it is not easy for me to imagine why people put themselves to so much trouble to go elsewhere. Perhaps it is all due to the rapidity and cheapness of modern travel conditions. You merely push a little money through a pigeon-hole in a railway station, and utter the name of the desired Somewhere, when lo! like the result of an occult incantation, a slip of paste-board will drop into your hand, which in turn, by the simple process of showing it to a number of uniformed men, will be the means of translating you to the place where you would be. Who would not be overcome by such a magic? Yet I have a magic, beside which the magic of touring slips into the limbo of futile things. Let me tell you of it; not for the sake of conversion, but out of gratitude.

My magic is concerned with going to Nowhere, which is quite a different thing to not going Anywhere. Others know of it, but they keep quiet. They are in no hurry, in the patois of commerce, to let the public in. But I dislike such privacy and break it down wherever I can. The difficulty, however, in this case is greater than usual, for money will not buy the requirements for the journey to Nowhere. You either have them or lack them, and there is an end of the matter. But they are not the things you throw into a ruck-sack at the last moment, though to be sure such things are not to be despised even by the Nowherer. They are the strange things a man carries in the cells of his brain or beneath the wings



## Going to Nowhere

of his imagination. They are no more tangible than these, and yet they have all the authority of money, as well as the grip of that which religious people understand by a call, which is something greater than money.

Once you possess these things you may safely set out for Nowhere. And then the miracle will happen, in this wise : Somewhere will come to you! For I have invariably found that by persistently going to Nowhere you not only ignore the object of travel, which is to get Somewhere, but you actually accomplish the fact by reversing the process. In going to Nowhere, Somewhere, let me repeat, indeed Everywhere, comes to you. This is no vain paradox; it is a mild statement of common fact, and because of this, and for no other reason, it reads astoundingly.

Everybody knows that even the adorable destinations of tourists rarely come up to expectation. Somehow or other it is the places by the wayside upon which the lingering eye is cast. And at that let us cease to wonder, for we are near the heart of the mystery. The most beautiful places are not those which you go to see deliberately, but those which visit you. They are the places which rise out of the shadowy plain to greet you un-awares; the places that steal upon you like dreams, that flood your vision like sunlight. They are, like all memorable things, the places that happen. If you go to meet them you are almost certain to miss them; for they are coy and shy, like beauty or joy, or a maiden new to love. You pursue

## Going to Nowhere

them and they retreat before you. But just wait awhile and they will peep at you over the hill-tops or between the pines: you will feel their presence stealing upon you like a new joy, and in a flash you will see a vision, and that vision is the vision of Nowhere.

This experience comes rarely or not at all to those who are for ever going Somewhere. The material of such experiences, to be sure, exists everywhere, but constant harping on approved destinations blunts the faculty of vision; and this is a great loss to those who go a-journeying. And it is not only the person who goes Somewhere who is damaged by the act. Somewhere also is injured. Deterioration is contagious, and places are destroyed or renovated by the spirit of the people who go to them. I know as fair an island as ever graced the sea. Once that island was Nowhere, and in those days it was peopled by fisher-folk and farmers who spoke their own language, sang their own songs, told each other their own tales, and provided each other with their own natural food: the fish of the sea, the sheep of the pastures, and the fruit of the plains. Since then the delectable island has become Somewhere, and its people are no longer fishermen and farmers; most of them are touts and flunkies, attending and exploiting a strange, noisy people for one-third of the year, and awaiting the return of the strangers for the rest. They are forgetting their own tongue, songs and tales, as they talk more and more the language, sing more and more the ditties,

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and read more and more the newspapers of the invaders. There are also other signs of evil, but anyone can see these in any Somewhere, so I will save my ink for less obvious things. My island is but one example of a modern ill which is spreading over the whole earth; no fair place is immune; those who gad about settle upon them like a blight, and peace and beauty shrink before their advance.

For that and for other reasons I go to Nowhere.

Anyone can go a journey, but every journey is a pilgrimage for those who go to Nowhere. To set out for Nowhere requires courage, therefore those who go there may be said to be alive. They are ready to take their chance and do not barter with a guide-book for promises of scenery, antiquities, or other conventional reward, at the end of the day's march. Enough for them the open road and the things life offers by the wayside. The violet shadows of the woodland path flecked with silver light; the tonic breath of the heath and the smell of peat; the shrill green of the new fronds among the crumpled tan of last year's bracken; the staccato flutter of hurried wings in the hedgerows; the fragrance of hay and cattle from the shippens; the buildings mellowed by time; the roll of down and the sway and rhythm of the sea; the murmuring music of dingles full of leaves, faint breezes, birds, and bees and lapping waters; the arrogance of mountains, and the hovering loneliness of sky-swept plains; these are the treasures Life offers to him who goes forth to Nowhere.

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But Nowhere is not only to be sought in country places or by the sea; to believe that would be to join issue with those absurd people who insist upon separating man and his works from Nature and her works, which is like separating the tree from its leaves, or the bird from its nest. All the things made by man are as much a part of nature as the things you read about in the natural history books. And deep in the heart of his masterpiece, the city, hides also the genius of Nowhere. No one knew this better than Charles Dickens, who devoted, literally, years to tramping to Nowhere in London, and the results are to be found in that immortal series of novels which constitute the Iliad of the Metropolis. And when wise old Dr. Johnson set a walk down Fleet Street against a walk to any Somewhere in England, he knew quite well, although Boswell has not recorded the fact, that the Nowhere of Fleet Street was the whole world.

I know not how many times I have walked to Nowhere in London, but this I do know, that every time I have done so some new revelation of the great city-county has come to me. London is strangely elusive to the tourist. Indeed, I know of no place, save Paris, which eludes those who come to see her so effectually as London. She deliberately lures them from her track by throwing what are popularly known as "sights" in their way. And they go back to the provinces thinking they have seen her, when they have only seen the Tower, Crystal and Buckingham Palaces,

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the Poets' Corner, Madame Tussaud's, and such things as your proper Londoner has dimly heard of but rarely seen. Paris also tricks the tourist after her manner by showing him sordid and wearisome things called "pleasures," which have very little to do with the real life of the sober and industrious capital of France, still less with pleasure.

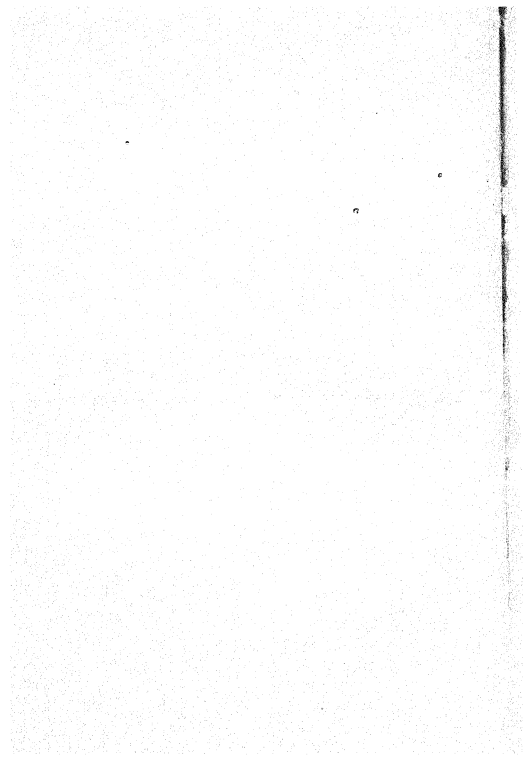
Yes, a thousand pitfalls and boredoms await the tourist, but he who goes to Nowhere is immune from such evils. He is under a spell which is irresistible. It is as though he were set apart, like a knight-errant in an age devoid of such orders. Indeed, as yet, these essential saunterers, wayfarers, rambler or whatever you may call them, are not conscious of their aim or condition, neither do they know one another by name. But, scattered and nameless as they are among men, a subtle bond links them together in an informal fellowship, and by chance signs they come to know each other when they meet on the open road. The Holy Grail lies in Nowhere, and those who go thither must needs belong to the same fellowship.

I never yet felt lonely on my journeys to Nowhere. Still it is pleasant to think that there are others going my way and that perchance we shall meet if not there at least on the road. Occasionally we have met and spoken, as they say of ships on the High Seas. One of these days, in sooth, I am quite prepared to find that the fellowship is much larger than I thought. Why not?

Everyone who is engaged in the great pilgrimage of Life—and what better thing can happen to

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any of us!—is marching to the same goal. It is the goal which is the repudiation of all goals, the great pathless way, unnamed on maps, unpraised in guide-books; it is the goal to which every man is destined. But most men prefer to go Somewhere, they have so little faith. How fruitless are their efforts they themselves will tell you. Nowhere is akin to wisdom, it is the wisdom of place, and like wisdom the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. Its beauties are real and enduring, yet they are not to be set down in words. Some say they have been revealed in music, but I doubt it. Nowhere has been defined in the happy bearing of those who have been there. Perhaps some day a great change will come over humanity, and all rushing hither and thither will cease. All the guide-books will be burnt, and scenery and antiquities will no longer be sought by weary tourists. In that hour shall Nowhere be discovered.



#### IV

### THE ART OF HOLIDAY

IT matters very little where you go, or when you go; it matters little what you do. The thing itself matters; and that thing is holiday—the break from the monotony of routine and the discipline of earning a living. To get away, to be free for a brief spell, to feel that you have not to get up at the appointed hour, to know that you can linger over your breakfast, to realise that the usual business train will depart without you, to look upon new scenes and strange faces, to breathe fresh air, to hear different sounds, to do different things, or better still, to do nothing at all—that is holiday. Fix upon a place, no matter what place, anywhere; put a few things into a bag, the fewer the better, and go. The change, I repeat, is the thing; scenery or amusements hardly count in this great business, for unless a man carry all the beauty of the world in his own mind, and all the joy of life in his own heart, he will not find them elsewhere. I have small sympathy with those wide-eyed enthusiasts who babble about spirit of place. Unless we carry the spirit of place within us as a part of our personal kit, we shall not find it elsewhere. We are joy and sorrow, and the world about us but material for their expression.

I doubt whether there are any sound rules for



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holiday-making, save that one which I have called change; and that after all is not arbitrary—it is fundamental. A holiday is no holiday unless you have change. The health of the human mind is stimulated by change of scene just as change of air is a tonic for the body. Change is good physic for all social pursuits; without it we get stale, and to get stale is to lose caste, to become inferior. More than half the pleasure we have in contemplating a holiday is, I believe, born of the instinct of change. But change is not merely the transference of oneself and one's family from one place to another. Far too many people court disappointment by that interpretation every year. To go away with your family is, in a great many instances, nothing but an elaborate contrivance for staying at home. I know nothing more depressing, with the possible exception of a debate in the House of Commons, than the sight of so many family groups at the seaside during the holiday season who are obviously bored past murmuring. These well-intentioned people are suffering from social starvation. They have change of air, change of scene, and change of some habits, but possessing all these and lacking change of society, they lack everything that makes for a successful holiday. Family life is an invaluable and delightful thing, and deservedly one of our most treasured institutions; for that very reason I am always being startled into surprise because we do not take much more care of it. One of the easiest ways of taking care of it is to break it up occasionally,

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and the best time for that operation would seem to be the annual holiday. But far from recognising this, the majority of people prefer to translate their family personalities, habits, and associations to a holiday resort. Such proceeding can only be successful by accident, for the simple reason that the family does not leave home, it takes home away with it. Which is a direct violation of the fundamental law of change.

But change, though important, is not inclusive. There are other and more subtle ingredients for a real holiday. These, however, vary with the individual, and provided that you have the necessary facilities it matters little what you do so long, of course, as you do what you like. Generally speaking, and if you are wise, you will leave things to chance. To map out a holiday, with times and places all catalogued and certified, with a list of things to see and how to see them, does, I know, please many people, but all such elaborate methods are dangerously akin to routine, and routine is useful only to those who cannot do without it. I once knew a man who was taking a holiday on the Yorkshire moors. He would walk about all day in an old suit of clothes, occasionally resting on the grey old stone walls of the wolds, or lolling in the heather, smoking an old pipe, talking to any chance acquaintance, and when hungry he would call at a wayside inn and refresh himself before once again taking up the great business of loafing. But one day he had an experience which ever afterwards he looked

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back at with a thrill of delight. Loafing down a moorside one morning, he came across a gang of navvies digging a big hole in the earth. He watched them for a while, then, fascinated by the swing and rhythm of their labour, he jumped into the hole, and, after a few words of explanation, borrowed a shovel and a pick and spent the rest of the day in manual labour, resting at midday with the navvies, and eating their rough and ready food. Then he sauntered to his inn, dog tired, but as happy as a god. That man got more out of his holidays than any man I have known. But he never made any fuss about it; indeed, he never called his holidays by that name. He used just to throw a few things into an old battered rucksack and disappear. He never used a map or itinerary of any sort; he simply disappeared, re-appearing again in due course feeling and looking aggressively happy and insolently healthy.

The success of a holiday is, perhaps, largely a matter of temperament. Some people can be happy anywhere, others nowhere. And after you have philosophised to your heart's content, and read all the advertisements for the guidance of the holiday-maker, you feel that your work is in vain. There is really no sound pocket wisdom for the art of holiday, for every would-be holiday-maker is a separate problem, and in the final resort he must be his own guide, philosopher, and friend. One might suggest, as I have done, that for holiday he should do what he wants to do, but even that is

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precisely what he wants to do! Most of us have devoted so much of our time to doing what others expect us to do that we have lost the faculty of pleasing ourselves. It was Mark Twain, I think, who said, with that hidden wisdom which was always a part of his humour, that there was only one better way of spending a holiday than lying under a tree with a book, namely, to lie under a tree without a book. I think the hint a very good one; but I generally find that most people follow it instinctively. How many times has one promised oneself much holiday reading, and how many times has that promise been unfulfilled? I have often dreamt of a really bookish holiday, a holiday, as it were, in a library, but I know I shall never have the courage to take such a holiday. Few people read books on a holiday, unless it rains, for if you are interested in the life about you books are superfluous, and if you are bored you cannot abide them.

Perhaps modern life is becoming too rapid for overmuch dalliance with books, and it becomes increasingly more difficult for bookish persons to catch up with the lost reading of yesterday. Still, it is good to have dreams, and the dream of a holiday in a library is a very pleasant one. We realise something of it, I fancy, when we drop into our kit-bags a few very friendly books, books that have stood the test of time and the sterner tests of familiarity—the “Religio Medici,” “The Golden Treasury,” the “Essays of Elia,” the “Greek Anthology,” the “Compleat Angler”—

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holiday books all, because they promote reflection in a gentle and intimate way. And even if we never look at the insides of them, it is as consoling to know they are there as it is to know that you have propitiated Aesculapius by providing yourself with simple prophylactics against indigestion and chill.

There is a certain piety in this time-worn promise of a bit of reading next holiday, and one does actually select one's portable library with becoming reverence, even if that part of the outfit sees the least service during the vacation. At the same time I do not under-estimate the value of the good resolution which lies behind this empty and innocent little piety; on the contrary, empty pieties and good resolutions are part of the natural equipment of every proper man. They were never meant to be performed or fulfilled, but in the scheme of things they serve their purpose. It is good to walk on a sea beach during the month of August if only to observe the triumphant defeat of good resolutions under the shade of the cliffs or the awnings of the camp chairs. There you will see dozens of fathers and mothers of families with printed matter before them, sometimes actually resting on their faces, and all bathed in what the poet Young has called "calm Nature's sweet restorer—gentle sleep." When I see these happy people thus employed I know their holiday is doing them good, and I know that literature, neglected, though not despised, has aided and abetted the kindly gods of health.

Thus does experience support my suggestion that

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holiday is artless rather than artful, using both words literally as all honest writers should. But as I write I feel the prospective opposition of possible readers whose faith is firmly based in some cunningly arranged plan of campaign. Now I like to believe that I am neither cynical nor pessimistic, yet I can see quite plainly, as in a kind of mental cinematograph, the coastwise towns of the British Islands in gala dress and thronged with strangers upon whom the natives smile a smile of welcome not entirely free of self-interest. The strangers, or rather "visitors," to give them their proper title, are the familiar British folk of the inland towns and cities on vacation; they are clad less severely than when they are at home: men assume light flannels, bright lounge coats and crushed or flapping hats, and there seems to be a conspiracy against the waistcoat; women are dressed less carefully and more comfortably than you might think possible. But mere apparel does not give you a full insight into the character of this holiday crowd; to get that you must observe its habits. From such an observation you will learn that all these people are practising a kind of traditional optimism: they are enjoying themselves according to certain settled principles—laboriously doing nothing, or frantically doing something—though which is which it is not easy to discover: lounging on the sands; swimming, or just bobbing about in the water; riding on donkeys or in char-a-bancs; getting backache in a rowing boat, or seasick in a yawl; promenad-

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ing along the front or discussing nautical matters with expectorating and portly long-shoremen (who have "never been upon the sea") on the jetty; listening to minstrels or pierrots and perhaps joining in the choruses (and, if you are of the fair sex, falling a little in love with the baritone or tenor, according to taste); being jolted on switch-back railways, or by the German band on the front—or on (or is it off?) the joy wheel. Such are the aids to optimism in my vision of the seaside at holiday time, and I must confess to a certain amusement at it all. To the unsympathetic looker-on this annual business of joy-hunting seems preposterous; he finds some little difficulty in convincing himself that the holiday folk at the seaside during August are having a good time.

Not many things are certain in our haphazard world, but there is at least one thing about which there is little doubt, that is that those who seek happiness miss it, and those who discuss it, lack it. Therefore, I am always inclined to be suspicious of the ways of pleasure-seekers and happiness-mongers. Not that I would have people other than happy—if that is their desire. My suspicion is born of the conviction that both pleasure-seeking and happiness-mongering are futile attempts to discover and supply the undiscoverable. Happiness, like art, happens; it has neither formulae, nor rules, nor systems; it droppeth as the gentle rain from Heaven upon just and unjust alike, and no man can say he has it because of his virtues, for, verily, he may be

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flouted to his face by the sinner over the way who is happier than he. It has, furthermore, been rumoured that man was made to mourn, and although rumour was ever a jade, there is much evidence that she has truth on her side for once. But if it be true, as seemingly it is, knowledge of the fact would only intimidate the coward; the brave man is he who is happy in spite of fate. At the same time it must be conceded that there is a subtle joy even in sorrow; melancholy is not necessarily the opposite of happiness, it may be a part of it. One may even enjoy it, without taking one's pleasures sadly, as we say. Indeed, if there is any truth in Keats' thought that "in the very temple of delight veiled Melancholy hath her sovran shrine," the converse also may be true.

Sad folk must certainly gloat upon some secret treasure of joy, which is a sealed document to the merely happy, or they would not be so contented. I believe Mrs. Gummidge knew a deeper joy in life—lone, lorn, and sad though she was—than ever Mark Tapley imagined in his most preposterously and irritatingly happy moments. But of the two, I prefer Mrs. Gummidge; she at least was under no illusions about making other people happy or even of attempting the pursuit of happiness for herself. She was content to feel lonesome, and in the attainment of that state attaining also to bliss as a sort of by-product. As to that undeserving immortal Mark Tapley—I think we may look upon him as an amiable fraud, an illusion of the big heart of Charles Dickens. Your



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pertinacious optimist is a very sorry dog, and I am inclined to shun him as one shuns those sick souls who are forever cracking jokes ("comic fellows, funny men, and clowns in private life," as Sir W. S. Gilbert put it). But I do not deny the value of optimism nor the necessity of pleasure. Optimism is one of the most powerful of human weapons against fate; it is almost as invincible as indifference. And, incidentally, it is the fundamental principle of society, for unless we believed that the majority of people, perhaps all people, were somehow and somewhere good and capable of joy, the thing we call society could not last for a week. Optimism is faith—faith in oneself, faith in one's fellows, and faith in the world: and faith is the motive force of life. But you can never say that you have happiness any more than you can say you are going to have it; you either have it or have it not. It is only when it has fled that you discuss it. It is just as absurd for a man to say he is going to be happy, as it is for a man to say that he is going to be himself. Both promises are abstractions, nothing more, and to strive to become an abstraction is to court destruction.

So it is that I am just a little doubtful about the motley array of paraphernalia at the annual seaside wedding of work of play. It is obvious that some people get some fun out of these things. But the test of the sort of fun obtainable at a popular pleasure resort, one that really goes into the business on a grand scale, say Blackpool or Coney Island, may be realised in the development

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of the pleasure machine. Simple games and healthy exercises have long since ceased to satisfy the holiday crowd, with the result that the pursuit of pleasure has become a pursuit of novel sensation. Enterprising merchants of delight have risen to the occasion first by inventing swings and roundabouts, then artificial toboggan slides and switchback railways, from these the progress to water-chutes, big wheels, and high towers has been easy. But the demand for exhilaration is by no means appeased, so fresh ingenuity has to be put forth in the interest of pleasure-seekers whose one desire seems to be giddiness and delirium. Avernus wheels are brought into being, and the pleasure-mongers, setting their monstrous brains to work, conceive wiggle-woggles and flip-flaps and topsy-turvies, and, save the mark, joy wheels! This last might well be the climax and symbol of pleasure follies. You sit on a slightly convex revolving platform, flush with the floor, and you hold on to its smooth surface, like a beetle or a gecko, until the increasing rapidity of the revolutions hurls you off, "you" is, of course, plural, for the joy wheel is a social machine, and you traffic with it in groups, scrimmaging somewhat to get the centre place, which by the laws of physics is most secure. You are thrown off singly and in knots, shrieking and laughing hysterically and fearfully, as many times as you like for threepence or sixpence, according to whether it is at Margate or Earl's Court. To such a pass as this has the search for the elixir of pleasure brought us.

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Therefore—but is there a therefore? Is it not in point of fact an absurd pass for any species to have got itself into—and outside sane argument? Let us agree, then, reader, you and I, that when all is said and done, the best of all holidays is the holiday that comes upon you unawares. The time of the year matters little, the place not at all; persons may have something to do with it, but it is just as likely they may have nothing to do with it. You do not know precisely how it comes about, and you do not care; perhaps even you may not know it has come about at all until you look backwards after it is over, and you know it cannot be repeated: holidays don't repeat themselves. It may be that you have gone somewhere on business, missed the train back, and found yourself wandering idly amid green fields or in a sleepy village with inviting inns and a grey old church. It may be that you have suddenly, for no obvious reason, thrown down your tools and fled for some still less obvious reason, to a near or remote place. You may have spent half the time in a railway train, or you may have gone no farther afield than your own favourite subterranean café. But the experience has been distinguishable from your average daily experience; it has had about it a quiet cheerfulness, a holy calm, and if you feel that it has been worth the trouble, you have achieved holiday. Perhaps, then, there is no art of holiday—holidays just occur. Shall we agree on that, we two?

## VAGABONDS

FEW of us escape at one time or another those intimations of wildness which exist remotely and shyly deep down below the most civilised exteriors. Not only in summer, when the sun glints over the hedgerows, turning the most circumspect of roads into mysterious and seductive highways leading undoubtedly to El Dorado or Utopia, but in winter as well, when the trees are bare, but none the less beautiful, and the blood courses through the veins in sympathy with the rhythm of a swinging pace.

There is something primal and necessary in the fascination, springing out of the exuberance and the passion of life. Every one listens to it sooner or later. It inspires the schoolboy to run away from school, sends rich men careering over continents in motor cars, and sets the clerk a-dreaming of his annual holiday: that small taste of freedom which is all he ever knows.

May not the emotions associated with such moments be Nature bidding man re-create himself by spending himself after her large and prodigal manner? Without some such call civilisation might bring about our ruin. Thoreau, who loved wildness better than most men, saw in it the preservation of the world, even though it might make vagabonds of us all. And side by side with

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Thoreau's love of the untamed life there is a widespread if furtive love of the vagabond. Poets have grown sentimental over his apparent abandonment of care, and reformers of our luxurious habits have imagined some context between the vagabond life and philosophic simplicity. But ordinary men do not want the simple life so much as the free life. After a spell of civilisation, they find themselves, as it were, tugging at their moorings; they want to break away and drive free for a while, and they half believe that vagabondage is the vehicle.

Whether they be right or wrong, there is something to be said for the idea that all great achievement is the result of the abandon which often expresses itself in the rake and the vagabond. The dream of El Dorado may be no more than Nature's lure to the wild. The man who has no stomach for the attainment of his desires is by that dream urged mysteriously into the world of active life when lack of spirit might otherwise bid him stay at home. But it does not follow that every wastrel is a hero in the cause of natural freedom.

At least, we may say that our pleasure in contemplating the vagabond and his kind is in response to a very real need. It is not so much that we see in him the incarnation of happiness, still less a model of human perfection; what we do feel is, that the vagabond is participating in the full current of life. That, of course, may wreck him, but also if we follow in his

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steps, but a spice of danger is an added lure to the brave heart. The dangers of football, of polo, of mountaineering or soldiering never yet made those sports unpopular, for the sufficient reason that the only life worth living is the life which is well spiced with risk. "Chance, in the last resort, is God," says Anatole France. The vagabond, if not always in the midst of romantic adventure, has always got his back to the wall; and that alone is an inspiring thing for the contemplation of healthy people. Weary and unkempt as he usually is, in him we see, no matter how dimly, the spirit of the hero, the hero who does not care whether he succeeds or no, the hero who does not desire to be intimidated by success. Behind the most grotesque tatterdemalion of the highway may exist the romantic desire to face odds, to test personal prowess, to have no possessions, that eating and drinking may be the merrier. The vagabond of romance symbolises such an ideal if he symbolises anything. Life for him is not a thing to be owned, but to be used; he does not stake out a claim in the world, but enjoys all claims, eternally moving onwards, seeing nothing anywhere "but what may be reached and passed."

The correspondence between conduct and sympathy, however, is often strangely paradoxical. There is, for instance, no doubt about the desire of most of us for what we are agreed is an exemplary life. That is what we are taught at school and, in fact, what we really believe to be correct. But there is no doubt also that beneath

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all our very sincere practice and advocacy of responsible virtues, we are more or less susceptible to the charm of irresponsibility. It strikes a romantic note to which our hearts are readily attuned. Such sympathy is recorded in our works of art, particularly in literature, where so many of the most popular figures are vagabonds of one kind or another, and so much happy writing is inspired by a spirit of abandonment. The works of writers who have something of the vagabond in their souls invariably inspire friendly devotion in their readers.

And this sentiment of affection exists in spite of our persecution of every practical attempt at real vagabondage. Vagabonds were not always persecuted; but to-day the very word, outside of literature, is suspect. A vagabond is no longer merely a wanderer; he is an idler and a worthless fellow to boot. Still even that does not kill our inner faith in at least his romantic claims to sympathy. Our sympathies do go out more readily to the good-natured vagabond, be he tramp, troubadour, gipsy, mountebank, soldier of fortune, or ordinary rake, than to the circumspect person of equal generosity.

It is not for nothing that so much of our favourite reading is about rakes and vagabonds; such a thing is no mere fad, it is a sign. Think of Falstaff and Autolycus; of Jasper Petulengro and Sinfia Lovell; of Ragged Robin and Paragot. There are few pleasanter literary memories than  
Falstaff was a disreput-

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able rogue, but somehow we prefer him to Henry IV., and in the same way wild Prince Hal is nearer to our hearts than that strutting rhetorician, Henry V. In our own times, Dickens, who knew popular tastes so well, created a whole range of characters each of whom has a like freedom from care. Even the immortal Pickwick is something of a vagabond, leaving aside Barnaby Rudge, the Jarleys, and all his delightful roving coachmen and strolling players. Dick Swiveller is one of the most charming people in fiction; and that rake who became a hero, Sidney Carton, one of the most adored—especially by women; although I have my suspicions that Sidney Carton was created by Mr. Martin Harvey, and not by Charles Dickens.

In the same way are we drawn towards the romantic rogues and vagabonds of history; towards kings who have had the wander-thirst and gone forth seeking adventure, like Richard the Lion-hearted; or to poets of wild, unreckoning ways, like François Villon and Byron, to troubadours and the student minstrels of Provence and Italy; or again to the wandering friars of mediæval times. And many good folk grow enthusiastic over the careless Bohemianism which is the reputed life of artists. Nothing can rob the middle classes of this myth, and although they have many opportunities of learning that most poets and artists nowadays pride themselves on their respectability, the nimbus of romance has been placed about the brows of the artist, and there it will remain.



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There is romance even in the familiar tramp of the highway, although he is shorn of his glamour in these strenuous days when we have raised the accident which has made it necessary for most of us to work for a living into an ideal. The idea is preposterous and the root of much evil.

But the genuine tramp shirks work on principle. Our laborious and regular ideals are not his. We like work on principle, or pretend we do; he hates it, and has the courage of his convictions. He is quite practical and frank, and would never do an honest stroke of work year in year out, unless absolutely forced to do so. So long as he can get food and clothing to satisfy his needs by simply asking for them, he fulfils his self-chosen vocation. When he is hard pressed by evil fortune, he stoops to an odd job which, since such things are beneath him, he does not hesitate to scamp as much as possible. Yet, object to the fellow as we may, down in the bottom of our hearts there is something which responds not always unkindly to the genuine tramp. We may pity the casual and hope to abolish him, but although we may hate the real tramp on principle, we cannot finally despise him.

England, like all lands with a failing peasantry, is a poor place for tramps, and yet with a little more practical sympathy what a paradise it might be for them, especially in the summer months. In Ireland, however, where national ideals are as yet less material, he has a better time; in fact, in the less commercialised parts of that country he is still considered a human being with rights and even a

## Vagabonds

destiny. He can usually depend upon hospitality from the peasants, and, in return, he gives them of his store of worldly lore; often he is a teller of tales, and in some cases he is the inheritor of the traditions of the old Irish minstrelsy.

That the tramp is still a considerable figure in the life of Ireland may be seen by the large and, on the whole, friendly part he occupies in modern Irish plays and poems. One remembers the clever vagabond who is the central figure of W. B. Yeats' play, *A Pot of Broth*. But more particularly does one recollect the amusing tramps in the plays of J. M. Synge, tramps who are created not as romantic ideas, but as records of Irish life and character. In these tramps we see personified real joy in the simple and mysterious things of nature—those things which come very close to what we call romance; who represent and seem to have convinced their compatriots of the fact that the tramp's lack of the desire of earthly goods is not altogether a vice.

In all countries there are these strange beings, living in the midst of the people but not of them: the weary Tramp of England, the nonchalant Hobo of America, the bronzed Sundowner of Australia, the sad-visaged Gorioun of Russia, no less than the more intimate associate of the peasantry, as the tramp usually is, in pastoral countries such as Ireland. But each in his way carrying on the tradition of freedom, if only that almost lost tradition of freedom from the tyranny of owning things.

## Vagabonds

What is popularly called the "Call of the Open Road" has long since made the amateur tramp a more and more familiar figure of our by-ways. People who live in houses are beginning to realise that there is no other way of seeing a country. Tramping is the most subtle and satisfying way of assimilating what beauty or charm a land may have; and, apart from the mere sensuous delight of the thing, there is no surer road to health of body or of mind. Tramping, indeed, has become one of the arts, and, like all art, it comes naturally to some, whilst others need tuition before they can use their materials with that certainty and dexterity necessary for the creation of joy out of good works. The opportunity of meeting life face to face, of tasting the joys of earth, comes to all of us now and then. Those who take it are wise; those who foster and woo the intimate call of the wild are wiser still. There are few habits so well worth cultivating as this habit of occasional lapse from the upholstery of civilised life, for in vagabondage we merge into the very source of life itself; civilisation is but its reflection, and often it is the reflection of a distorting glass. The tonic of such contact with wildness as we may get by tramping puts us once more in tune with reality.

## VI

### SPRING

I HAVE watched her coming shyly over the tree-tops these many days, and now she is here. You could almost feel the sap tingling in the branches as she drew nigh, and when she was within hailing distance the happy trees greeted her by hanging upon their branches a myriad tiny lanterns of sparkling green.

Sometimes I caught a glimpse of her in a gown of shimmering white; but she generally wore sober russet, touched cunningly here and there with green. Sobriety, however, ended with her gown, for her whole being was intoxicated with young life. She came romping like a hoyden among the shivering shrubs, her tempestuous petticoats shaking the remnant of last autumn's leaves and catkins out of their stark hands.

A merry child, this Spring, full of pranks and whims, and, like all children, an eternal problem. She will and she won't, like a maiden, like a woman; but generally she won't. That is why she sets the bards a-singing. When she will she is beautiful with the beauty of young things, and when she won't she is also beautiful, with the beauty, the more seductive beauty, of promise unfulfilled.

But over and above every one of her moods she never allows you to forget that she is the girlhood

## Spring

of the year, and she reminds you as well that all girls worth their salt are coquettes at heart.

How she flirts and teases! See her smile and pout; see her coax—and scratch! Now she leans forward with beckoning lips, you advance, and she is gone, and the breeze is full of her laughter. Again she meets you with gay crocuses in her hands, and as you go to take her gifts she hits you with a snowball, or leaves you blinking in a shower of rain; and in the midst of your surprise you catch sight of her shaking her curls at you from a sunny patch over the hazel hedge.

Yet you cannot resist her; she still lures you on with renewed hope, scattering fair promises behind her. Your faith in her is immortal; you feel she will not always be so capricious, and that anon she will pelt you with kingcups and cowslips, with daisies and buttercups, instead of with hailstones and snowballs. And you know surely that the tender green, which now only glints among the russet folds of her gown, will soon robe her completely, and that it will be decorated with dew-roses and flounced with cloths of blue and gold; and on her head will shine a coronet of hawthorn blossom and laburnum.

Meantime she is maiden Spring. Her gown is the colour of life, the colour of the awakening earth; its peeping green the symbol of creation. Her growth is marked by this spreading greenness of things. Green is for us the universal colour. It follows the ploughman like a beneficent fairy,

## Spring

giving them a richer beauty; it tingles in the branches until they burst into leaf as birds burst into song. It broods mysteriously over waste places in strange devices, and lurks elfishly in the hearts of the flowers; it lights up the eyes of animals, and shimmers over the wings of the raven and the rook, and on the soft breast of the dove.

But this maiden Spring, who makes the world green again, is not only coy and whimsical; she is brave and warlike, a Joan of Arc, if you will, battling against tyrannical winter, in the name of the only true faith, which is life. For does she not come with a flourish of swords and the glancing of many spears? Indeed she is the veriest of Amazons leading a host of warriors against the brown battlements of winter.

Mark how her legions advance. First come the fair ranks of the snowdrop, an advance guard of light infantry pushing strong delicate lances through the frost-bound earth. Then follow company after company of hardy troops, crocus, jonquil, and daffodil, marching in gallant array; then the solid ranks of the veteran grass blades, flanked by the gleaming swords of the iris; whilst overhead glance the green arrows of the beech and the assagais of the chestnut.

Sun and rain wait upon her armies, tempering their spears and swords, and quenching their thirst; and all the birds lift up their voices in a mighty war-song, half rebellious "Ça ira," half chant of praise and jubilation.

## Spring

True, the birds are never wholly silent in our favoured land, but they never sing so bravely as they do during this great annual contest. Even the good sparrows and the robins, who never desert us in our darkest hours, chirp more bravely, and sing a fuller melody; and throstle and blackbird tune their merry notes to richer themes; whilst the skylark, "singing of summer with full-throated ease," urges from above the hosts of Spring with spurs of silver song. All the little warblers and finches pipe their jolly marching ditties, or blow their bugles in the hedgerows; the rooks shout their advice from their watch-towers in the elm-trees; and the starling with infinite virtuosity repeats everything he hears in exaggerated terms like an enterprising war correspondent.

And as the legions of the Amazon add victory unto victory, the music swells in mightiness, augmented after each triumph by the string orchestras of the insect world, until the last citadel is taken, when the movement changes and the great war-song dreams itself away in a hymn of praise. The renewal of life is accomplished, Spring has conquered.

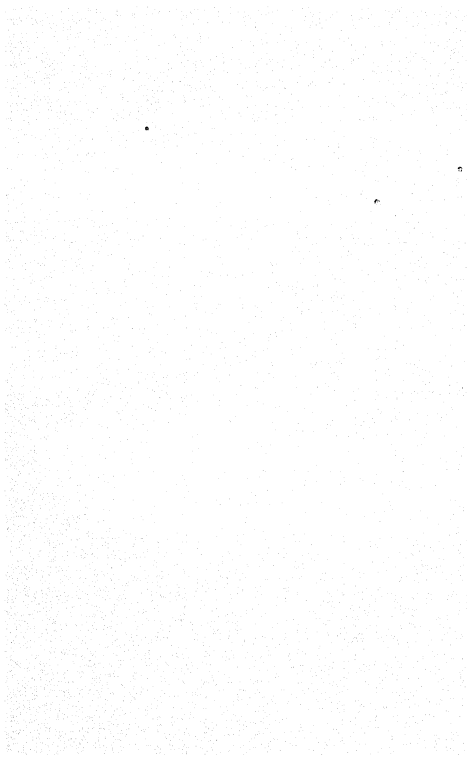
The birds that went on furlough in the autumn begin to come back to the army. A butterfly flaps lazily in the sun; a swallow skims over the tarn; the cuckoo rings her monotonous wedding bell; you linger out of doors as the sun sets in a golden haze and watch the angular capers of the flitter-mouse. A new note of passion has come into life.

## Spring

The trees are fully clothed with foliage, you can no longer see their graceful limbs. The air is rich, the grass is deep and ripe; the year is no longer cool and slim and energetic; the spears of Spring are gone, and Spring herself, though still beautiful, is plump and voluptuous. You admire her still, but your admiration, though just as deep, perhaps deeper, is not so bright, it is clouded with melancholy.

You know not why this should be so; but it is quite natural. Your melancholy is mortal dread of change. You will get over it. But standing as you do at that mysterious moment of life when you can feel the transfiguration of the girlhood of the year into something new and strange, you cannot but feel sad. At one moment she was with you, elfish, capricious, coy, and, even as you stood in adoration, her wildness fell from her, the coronet of may-blossom dropped from her head, the violets faded out of her hands, and in a flash she was gone, and where she stood stands a ripe beauty with a crown of roses on her brow.





## VII

### APRIL

"And every sky was blue and rain  
And sudden rainbows in between,  
And every bough was green again  
And all the world was gilt and green."

RALPH HODGSON.

EVEN when you are quite well—and you are never quite well unless you can appreciate the tonic sting of the East wind—you enter April with a sense of daring. You are glad, but your gladness is qualified by remembered risks, for you are aware that in spite of every dear and safe surprise there are surprises of a different kind. In the midst of the most innocent of sunburnt days you may be ambushed by frost and snow, drenched by rain or hailstoned out of your knowledge of the almanac. But you do not mind; you gladly brave all these things for the treasures of life vouchsafed to you and the promise of life to come. There is something in the very air of April which gives you hope—and more than hope—for the air of April, with its sudden changes from warmth to piercing cold, thrills and satisfies like nothing else in the gamut of the seasons. April trips you into love with life, and with yourself—both good things. Her very treachery is encouraging, pulling the bravery out of you, tempting you, teasing you, and laughing at you—especially if

## April

you are so thankless as to lose your temper or your health, for not all of us are strong enough to withstand her tantrums. But still, even those who cannot brave the East wind feel elated when they approach April; even those who look at the fair, treacherous world of "gilt and green" through a window, who travel through April, as it were, in closed carriages, are filled with wistful delight. Something is wrought up within them, the soul responds to the outside riot of new growth, the very crudities of laughing abandon, the sharp edge to shade and shine, fill them with vague longings and new desire. We all feel that anything may happen in April, it is the month of romance, the time to be alert and free—for what fair Helen may not await us on the morrow—what Utopia may we not enter the day after?

Such a month might well have set the bards a-singing; and so it has. But, to be frank, not with that full-throated acclamation such an occasion deserves, and I am only constrained from believing the poets guilty of injustice, or, worse, insensitiveness, by the conviction that every Spring-song is a song of April. The contention is as obvious as it is inevitable. April is the type-month of Spring.

"April brings the primrose sweet  
Scatters daisies at our feet."

Primroses and daisies are Spring's own flowers as well as April's, and if Spring is greater than April in point of time, surely the greater is, in this case,

## April

contained within the lesser, for all Spring weathers give to April Spring's romance of inconstancy and all the flowers of Spring give her compensating virtues. The winds of March blow the daffodils into her lap as she in turn scatters largesse of daisies about the path of May. And, as though anxious to fantasise us with too much delight, Nature has filled this month with the melodies of our bravest birds. So packed with Spring is April she needs no laureate for herself; every poet is her laureate, for has not every poet sung the praises of Spring?

" The fields breathe sweet, the daisies kiss our feet,  
Young lovers meet, old wives a-sunning sit,  
In every street these tunes our ears do greet,  
Cuckoo, jug-jug, pu-we, to-witta-woo!  
Spring! The Sweet Spring!

What could be more like April than that old song? Such songs recall pictures inscribed to the memory of this or that goddess, but which have obviously been inspired by the glorious form of some rare model. April is thus the model for all Spring poets.

Not that there are no songs inscribed to April. There are many. And significantly they are to be numbered among the most familiar of lyrics, although May and June are the supreme months of the poets' homage. May especially has claimed the heart of English singers, and if the ancient adage bids us still have a care for our health:

" Till May is out  
Ne'er change a clout."

## April

the poets are conscious of great joy. Great joy is prophesied—"While the jolly Hours lead on propitious May." May is "the merrie month," the symbolic time-spell of Merrie England. And above all it is the month of young love.—"Love, whose month is ever May," as all our bards from the most tripping of lyrists to austere Milton have perceived:

"Now the bright Morning-star, day's harbinger,  
Comes dancing from the east, and leads with her  
The flowery May, who from her green lap throws  
The yellow cowslips and the pale primrose.  
Hail, bounteous May, that does inspire  
Mirth and youth and warm desire;  
Woods and groves are of thy dressing,  
Hill and dale, doth boast thy blessing!  
Thus we salute thee with our early song,  
And welcome thee, and wish thee long."

May is immortalised in song; all that need be said in her praise has been said these many times; but with April it is otherwise. She is younger, bringing promises rather than fulfilments, and only the most discriminating of poets have singled her out from among the dear entangled wilfulness of Spring. April is neither decisive nor excessive, she is a hint, a connecting link in the chain of earth-moods, a bridge thrown between the hard fact of March and the tender obviousness of May. She is in fine an opportunity for nice distinction. Yet, elusive as she is, she has been caught, as I say, in the net of song. Shakespeare, child of April, threads her into the magic of his melody. And the more personal he is the more he reverts

# April

to his natal month for images. The Sonnets are embroidered with April motifs; and he draws upon the month of coy changes and impulsive youth for some of his most beautiful images:

- "Thou art thy mother's glass, and she in thee  
Calls back the lovely April of her prime:  
So thou through windows of thine age shall see,  
Despite of wrinkles, this thy golden time."

Elsewhere he captures young love in an April phrase—"The April's in her eyes; it is love's Spring." And again the month symbolises rarity—"April's first-born flowers, and all things rare." Yet the rarity of April's flowers and other treasures are not given general praise alone, they are singled out for individual song. And if Spring is the season of youth, as all poets aver, Shakespeare sang of Spring when he sang of April:

- "When proud-pied April, dressed in all his trim,  
Hath put a spirit of youth in everything."

In our own time the April song has proved its universality by spontaneous acceptance. Such lines, for instance, as Robert Browning's:

- "Oh to be in England now that April's there,  
And whoever wakes in England sees, some morning un-  
aware,  
That the lowest boughs and the brushwood sheaf  
Round the elm tree bole are in tiny leaf,  
While the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough  
In England—now!"

come very near to the common heart which is the ultimate goal of all great song, and it is worth

# April

noting that the second verse of this song is not nearly so well known. Less near, because less familiar, is George Meredith's

" When April with her mild blue eye,  
Comes dancing over the grass,  
And all the crimson buds so shy  
Peep out to see her pass:  
As lightly she loosens her showery locks  
And flutters her rainy wings;  
Laughingly stoops  
To the glass of the stream,  
And loosens and loops  
Her hair by the gleam. . . ."

and if William Watson had sung only his April song he would not have sung in vain:

" April, April  
Laugh thy girlish laughter;  
Then, the moment after,  
Weep thy girlish tears!  
April, that mine ears  
Like a lover greetest,  
If I tell thee, sweetest,  
All my hopes and fears,  
April, April,  
Laugh thy golden laughter,  
But, the moment after,  
Weep thy golden tears! "

April, as the name implies, is the opening time, the time of awakening, the morning of the year, when Nature sets once more about her great business of re-creation. January, February, and March may conceivably, in our northern climate, be so much alike, especially in what we call a backward year, that their differing characteristics

## April

are unrecognisable without definite search. But no matter how backward your year, April will show individuality of her own. She is one of the events of the year, a month of youth and hope and growth. We look on at Nature's wonderful demonstration of vitality, not only with the sort of delight that comes of contrast with the darker and less buoyant days of Winter, but with a jubilation which shows that we, too, are affected by the awakening earth; that we—tame, conventional, and artificialised human beings—are moved also to newer life, so that we desire to sing, to cut capers, to peacock ourselves with bright colours like any wild things. But over and above any rejuvenescence of vitality April may give us, and all she may mean to us in happy consciousness of health, there is something that gives to the month of April an added charm, for in addition to her beauty we are conscious of that beauty's evanescence, we know it will all pass away too soon, that the delicacy of the green world, the sharpness and brightness of things, the girlish bloom, will presently be merged in the grossness of the adult year; and so we look upon April with the sort of interest we might have had when we looked upon a poet whom we knew would die young. See how quickly the wonder of cherry and apple blossoms fall; how fleet the daffodils and narcissi are; how soon the lilac fades. . . . For a moment it would seem as if Nature drew aside the curtains which veiled from us the realm of eternal youth, inviting us to enter, and then,



## April

at the moment of our acceptance, drew them together again bidding us stay in the changing world and grow old. But there is one thing we can never regret. April is the month beloved best of the gods, for April does not grow old. She dies young in all her young beauty, but some infinite mercy has hidden the end from us, for we are as little conscious of her passing into May as we are of the progress of the slip of the new moon to a new and fuller quarter. April, although a month of growth, does not appear to grow, she comes and is gone, like a fairy lamp that goes out too soon—but we are not left in darkness—the fuller lamp of May is already trimmed.

## VIII

### HEDGEROWS

I SOMETIMES wonder what England would be without her hedgerows; and particularly does the thought arise when those illimitable walls of life are bursting into leaf and song. The thought of such an England, an England fenced with iron instead of whitethorn, fills me with dismay. England without hedgerows would be like England without Shakespeare.

And yet, how many of us are properly conscious of this great boon? How many of us realise what it means when we are moved again and again by the first glimmer of green on the hedgerows, that green which blends magically with the deepening notes of blackbird and thrush, as if all were one musical strain? At such moments our joy is something more than a response to the call of beauty at the birth of new life: it is, consciously or unconsciously, a response also to one of the most remarkable manifestations of our national genius.

For the hedgerow in the modern world is English—as English as Shakespeare, and as great. I am proud of many English things, but of none more than this. In our hedgerows I see all that is great in our race and all that is beautiful. I see in them nature turned to the will of man with such inevitability that both man and nature are

# Hedgerows

benefited; I see the creation of a beautiful thing by a whole people, and not by any special individual; I see, in short, beauty springing naturally, as it always does, out of skill running hand-in-hand with utility and common-sense.

The idea of the hedgerow itself is not English. It is one of those many ideas which, though born elsewhere, have come to our land for full fruition. For just as Shakespeare was a part of the Renaissance which began in Italy, so are the hedgerows the consummation of an idea which also began in that sunny land.

They guarded the vineyards of ancient Rome, as they guard to this day those of modern Italy. When the Romans colonised Britain and conferred upon this land the inestimable boon of a roadway the hedgerow was part of the gift. Dangerous and indefinite parts of the Roman roads were guarded and marked by walls of living trees, and the institution of the hedgerow was born in our midst. But the idea took centuries to develop, and it did not become general until the end of the sixteenth century or the beginning of the seventeenth.

Once thoroughly appreciated, the hedgerow rapidly grew in use, until it marked the boundaries of nearly all our tracts of land. England has so surpassed other countries in its adoption of this beautiful method of fencing-in fields that she may be said to have made the hedgerow her own. All those who set eyes on our shores for the first time know this. Hedgerows dominate

# Hedgerows

our lowlands and climb up our hills to something like a thousand feet, gladdening the eye more permanently than any other of our products.

I can imagine nothing more beautiful than these walls of living green. Similar as they are to the casual glance, they are, in reality, as infinite in variety as they are illimitable in extent; and where there is a well-grown hedgerow there is life, for in themselves they contain a whole world of natural things—all the more interesting for being interwoven with the life and habits of man.

The hedges are associated not only with orderly agriculture, noble parks, or trim gardens. They are intimately linked up with other phases of human life, particularly with that element which borders the social hem as they border the fields. Vagabonds and others who stand beyond the prim fences of society are known as hedge-folk, just as the wandering priests of the common people in the Middle Ages were known as hedge-priests. And many other things in human life which are a little wild are associated with the hedgerows, not least of which is new love, for we know that

“ Every shepherd tells his tale  
Under the hawthorn in the dale ”

in the bright, untamed days before domesticity sets in.

As for Nature, she herself has returned man's compliment of the hedgerow, by making the hedgerows her home. They teem with vitality. Mysterious walls of life in a double sense, housing,

## Hedgerows

as they do, a far greater number of wild things than any other place or object in our land. It is in the hedges that most of our familiar birds nest, from the cheerful and friendly hedge-sparrow up to those incorrigible melodists, the thrush and the blackbird. Most of the finches make their homes in those walls of green; the nightingale sings his passionate prelude to summer in their branches; the wrens and the tomtits fuss up and down their quickset lanes, and the robin nests cosily in the ivy-clad banks from which they spring.

It is in the hedgerows also that our smaller animals love to find a home; rats, dormice, weasels, stoats, hedgehogs, are all to be found there. And amidst the infinite song and chatter and squeak which accompanies the affairs of all these little creatures, we have a constant humming of innumerable hedge-loving insects, the whispering of bordering sedges, and the eternal music of the breeze sighing gently through their dense foliage.

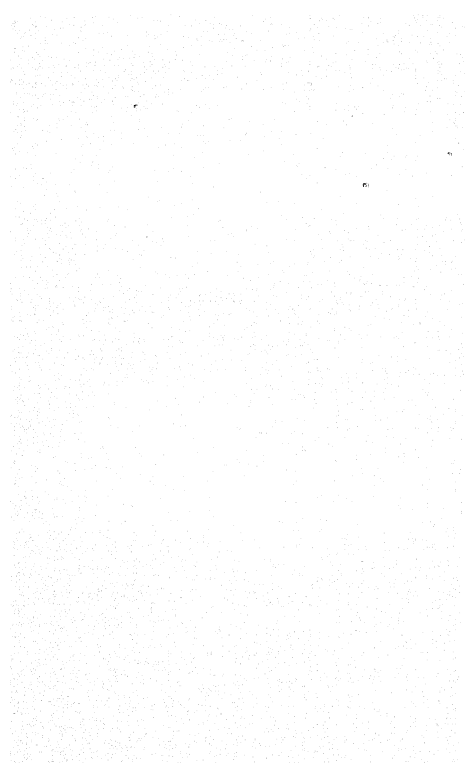
But the wonder of the hedgerows is not in the life they draw to them, it is in themselves. The life they attract is but an evidence of their own inherent vitality and variety. The hedges are growing walls, that is their chief call for wonder; and then comes their variety. Almost every tree that grows in England has been induced to lend its strength and beauty to their cause.

The queen of the hedgerows, as we all know, is the whitethorn. Greater is she than hazel, or holly, or blackthorn; greater still because she allows

## Hedgerows

all these and every other tree that has been honoured by service in her ranks to grow and flourish by her side. The hedgerow is never a single growth, it is as composite as the English race. The flowers and creepers of the hedge banks are as much a part of it as the whitethorn; and no hedgerow is complete unless it is decked with bramble and eglantine, honeysuckle and travellers' joy.

At all seasons of the year are the hedgerows beautiful, but at none are they so beautiful as in early spring when the young leaves flash from the brown tangle of branches like green fire. More beautiful are they then even than when covered with the fragrant snow of the may, the delicate pink stars of the June dew-rose, or the scarlet hips and haws of autumn. Then do they seem most alive, you almost feel them growing; and their green fire seems to be a part of the riot of song which swells from their hearts.



## IX

### WINTER GLAMOUR

*There is winter in the air :  
Frost and sunshine everywhere,  
Rime with branches intertwined,  
And the frolic of the wind  
Forcing into merrie trot,  
All the warm blood man hath got ;  
And the sunshine everywhere,  
Rarely warm and debonair—  
Therefore youths and maids be gay  
On a winter holiday.*

OUR love of summer in England is rarely tried by overmuch familiarity; were it so I doubt not that our poets would tune their languorous notes to cooler themes. For summer is a flamboyant goddess loved best at a distance; I love her best when she is no nearer than Morocco; at that distance she has charms which almost move me to song; but when she draws nearer, as she is wont to do sometimes, with her pageantry of fiery flower-decked days, my love becomes indifferent.

I long then to see her foliage heaped in great brown piles and sending forth the sacrificial incense of autumn; I long to see the hot dust raised by her golden chariots on the highways laid low again with the rain of less torrid days, and to hear the same highways ring once more to the tread of hoof on frost-bound surface, and, better still, to see once more the trees stand bare and graceful, with never a leaf to hide their sinuous loveliness,



## Winter Glamour

as the sun, no longer a proud god too bright for human eyes, but a friend to walk with in equal fellowship, sheds soft light over wood and glade, and over brown arable lands and grey streets.

Surely the excessive worship of summer to the detriment of winter is a sign of frailty. It is fleshly fear of the frank strength of the cold: a physical recognition of unfitness for the necessary effort demanded by winter in her traffic with man. Or from another point of view, it is akin to a confession of moral weakness in the face of that which is naked and unashamed. Most objections to winter are but the querulousness of the invalid, for winter is no less beautiful than other seasons, no less bountiful to those who are not subdued by the abuse of Nature, and no less uncomfortable.

What a folly it is to suppose that winter is the dead season—and the poets are much to blame in this matter, for they have spread the false doctrine. Winter is no more dead than summer is. It is certainly not so much alive in the blossoming sense, but it is quick enough in other ways. Changed, to be sure, is the face of Nature—her greenness is confined to the fields and the lichen-covered tree-trunks. In place of the assertive verdure of June there is the prevailing brown, Nature's predominant note in northern latitudes, the colour of earth, with its familiar earthy fragrance full of I know not what suggestions of man's immemorial kinship with the mysterious mother.

This colour of earth, so elusive in summer, when

## Winter Glamour

its homely scents are lost in the fragrance of the flowers, and its strangely friendly mould labours beneath the foliage of a myriad growths, comes upon us in winter-time with the surprise of revelation. It is the old, old earth again, more akin to man than perhaps any organic thing save man, more close to man than any other thing. For the spirit of the earth is in him, he is bone of her bone, flesh of her flesh, her child to whom she is revealed again after the leaves are fallen, after his eyes have feasted upon the innumerable phases of her progeny in the periods of foliage and blossom.

This perhaps is why certain natures feel a new joy at the sight of the fresh-turned corn lands. To see the sturdy horses plod dreamily over the stubble into which the ploughman drives his blade, leaving behind him long fragrant furrows of fertile mould, is to them a joy, a devout exercise. It is not merely the stalwart labour they see, but the whole rhythm of the earth; and the association of man with organic life, the very genesis of the processes of growth. For them the old earth is never dead, least of all in winter, which is the period of preparation for the flowers and songs of summer. It is but a sleep, a sleep of health and hope, like that of a growing child whose growth continues the while, or that of a healthy man weary with sane labour—it is the beauty sleep of life.

And, from the æsthetical point of view, the woodland beauty of June is redundant compared with the fine reticence of December. The arti-

## Winter Glamour

ficers of the winter forests have a rare taste in illumination, they allow nothing to come between the inmost grace of branch and trunk, and the tempered light of the winter sun. They seem to have exercised a process of reduction, in much the same manner as the sculptor who chisels away the superfluities of the block of marble until the goddess within stands free in splendid ultimate beauty. So have the winter woods been treated. The masses of foliage have been stripped from the branches, and strewn like the fragments of marble around a statue; then rises out of its soft brown carpet in all the uncloaked majesty of a perfect thing, the leafless tree, intricate yet symmetrical, graceful yet strong, a symbol of infinite beauty.

This is but one joy of the winter woods; it is the joy in beauty of form. No less beautiful is the colour of the woods when the trees are bare. For then the soft browns of the fallen leaves blend with all the more delicate shades of green peculiar to shy mosses and furtive lichens, and the grey distances reveal purple boles and mysterious blue branches, startled by illuminated clusters of yellow fungi. Then do the pines wave dark-plumed heads above limbs of flame, and the white arms of the dancing birch-trees glisten in the sun. The laurels cluster in hillocks of polished green, and the scarlet berry of the holly shines like a beacon over all the woodland peace.

Then again there is the beauty of frost when the rime traces its delicate white lines over everything; when all the world becomes a study in

## Winter Glamour

black and white, and one goes forth to walk or skate with a new sense of life; with a strange impulsive vigour, an epicurean sense of resistance towards some kindly yet indomitable antagonist. It is like going into a contest with a conscious determination to taste its every phase; with the sure knowledge also that Jack Frost, though fully intending to play the game and lay you low if he can, is nevertheless all the better pleased when you conquer him with quick, hot blood coursing through your delighted veins and resisting him laughingly at every point.

But these are outside joys, and they are but half of the fascinations of winter. There is another side, a side more intimate and fully as beautiful, a side that welcomes the shortening of the days and the cooling of the sunbeams, because it is happily haunted with a piquant vision full of tender memories and comfortable delights. For as the brown earth of winter days is a revelation to man of his kinship with all things, so is the blazing hearth a revelation of his kinship with all men. And it is around this altar of flame that those inner joys of winter cluster, bringing into prominence the essential fellowship of man, the *camaraderie* of the true social life.

It is most fitting that this symbolism should have its great feast. And when we have taken our delight in the beauty of winter sunshine aslant upon echoing woods and furrowed earth, we take our memories of it, in great nests of mistletoe and branches of holly, into our homes, which, by this

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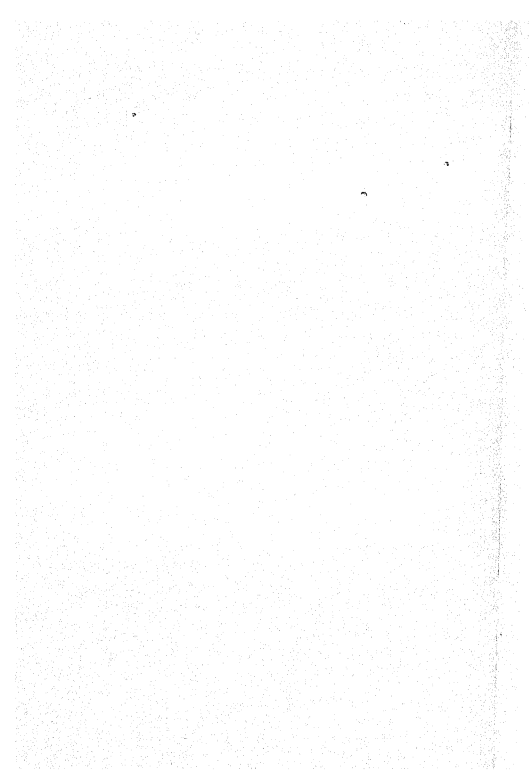
act, cease to be castles and become temples whose altar is the blazing hearth.

Far back in the dawn of that conscious state which made man possible was born a new power, a new knowledge, almost a new sense—the sense of fire. The animals and even the vegetables knew the use of water and air, and used these elements fearlessly. But it was reserved for man to use and love fire. And now when the hearth burns with a rich glow and the chairs circle round the warmth, in the twilight when it seems a fault to light up, man harks back to his dim beginnings. His contented silence as he watches the embers form strange fantasies to fit his dreams; his sense of peace and comfort is charged with a thousand memories born out of the unfathomable past. His peace at such times is built out of the unrecognised memories of ancestral bivouacs beside darkling caves, of jousts and junketings, of all the ages that have contributed their energies to the building of the present.

Summer can give us roses and long fair days of the sun; autumn gives us of the earth's bounty, golden cornfields, stored granaries, and sun-kissed fruits; spring comes with wind-swept robes of dainty emerald, recalling us to the rebirth of material things; but no season save winter can bring us the long, warm fireside evenings, when all social life seems concentrated in a triumphant cosiness. And as though man had recognised this, we have not his words or his songs, but we have his most memorable festival established in

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the heart of this abused season. What is May Day, or Midsummer Day, or Michaelmas Day compared with Christmas Day? They are almost as immaterial as the equator, so much so that we are hardly aware of them until the day after. But what proper man, or better, what proper child, ever forgot it was Christmas Day? The idea is absurd. Christmas is an entity among days with a distinct and deliberate flavour that brooks no denying. It is a real thing, like Santa Claus, and not a myth like the May Queen, who, as often as not, is merely some pretty village damsel playing at masquerade. I have not had the good fortune to see Santa Claus myself, but I know a little girl who has, and that is sufficient evidence for me. Besides, she produced evidence: she showed me the presents he brought her, all cunningly stuffed into a stocking, and just the things she wanted: an orange, and chocolates, a picture book and a wonderful Japanese doll. Of course they "couldn't all get into the stocking," I was informed, and I tried to think what other season possessed so kindly an attendant spirit; but it made my head ache trying to discover the impossible, and I was glad to be consoled with some of the self-same chocolates brought by Santa Claus.



## X

### DESERTS OF NOISE.

THE maddest place in all England is Cheapside. If you were to describe it accurately and put it in a book no one would believe you. Yet there it is—a monstrous huddle of noisome traffic—a roaring canyon of commerce. Sometimes I go there, but I always come away with the feeling that I have been riding the nightmare.

The last time I was there I met a friend at the corner of Gutter Lane. "Listen to it," I said to him, waving my right arm, to the peril of the passer-by, "is it not monstrous?" He looked at me, stupidly, I thought. "Come down here," I continued, putting my arm through his and conducting him towards a subterranean café; "let us, like hunted things, escape to earth!" And down there, over the coffee and cigarettes, amid tobacco clouds and the rasp and clatter of dominoes, I told him about Cheapside. He listened meditatively, with a pained expression coming and going on his face, and as we left he said with tragic conviction, "It will be a sad day for England when there is no noise in Cheapside!" With a sigh, I went my ways.

What is happening in Cheapside is happening everywhere. Cheapside is but the symbol of the high noises of modernity. And we have become injured to them; they have mastered us like a fatality: our indifference is resignation.



## Deserts of Noise

So triumphant is the clangour that it is now almost impossible to realise its pressure on the senses except by sudden contrast. So certain is the grip of noise that a gradual unloosening after flight to some hushed rural place, although giving relief, does not awaken us to the tyranny of the thing itself. Nothing will do this save a sudden change from noise to quiet.

In London, where the clamour of the age meets in a triumphant crash, such an experience is still possible. It can be tried by any one who is not quite tone-deaf, by the simple process of passing from the hubbub of Holborn into the rich stillness of Staple Inn. The change is as though the dance of life had suddenly abandoned rag-time for the stately movement of a minuet.

When you leave the fussy pavement of the great thoroughfare, and turn under the age-worn archway beneath the familiar timbered houses, you feel a sharp and definite relief; and, by the time you have fully entered the grey, cobble-stoned quadrangle with its flagged pathways laced and flecked with the green shadows of the plane-trees, you find relief giving place to wonder. It is almost a physical wonder—"born of the very sigh that silence heaves," and you taste it deliberately as you taste the first moments of peace following bodily or mental pain. The sudden releasing of the grip of noise brings you face to face with the essential fulness of quiet. You are surprised to find that quietness is full of low sounds, like the murmuring of bees or mountain

## Deserts of Noise

streams—sounds which are a real part of life and which have been obliterated by the outside clamour. And you realise that your own soul, which up to now you had somehow overlooked, is not one with the noise, but kin to this living silence. You, in short, possess yourself.

At other times you own not yourself; you are possessed by the legioned devils of noise who clamour indecently in the public places for your soul. Every time you give way to them, every time you live them down, they conquer you. There is no escape save flight.

I do not advise flight because noise in itself is evil. That would be folly, for evil, like other abstract terms, is purely relative. Besides, are there not noises which we all know to be good? Noises which spring from the harmony of life, or from the contest of healthy forces—the cheers of a multitude with a united purpose, the cries and counter-cries of political meetings. These are music. But the clatter of a modern city is not music any more than its smoke and grime are decorative art.

The noise of a modern city is nothing but the creaking of the wheels of commerce; it is a shuffling, a colliding, a groaning, a dissonance of expletives. . . . It is the scurry of an age which rushes hither and thither after it knows not what; the tumult of a people who have forgotten the meaning of utility in their haste to buy and sell. Life has become a market-place, a stock exchange, and repose, reticence, and quietness have been

## Deserts of Noise

lost in a maze of tradesmen's war-whoops, each wildly striving to outshout the other.

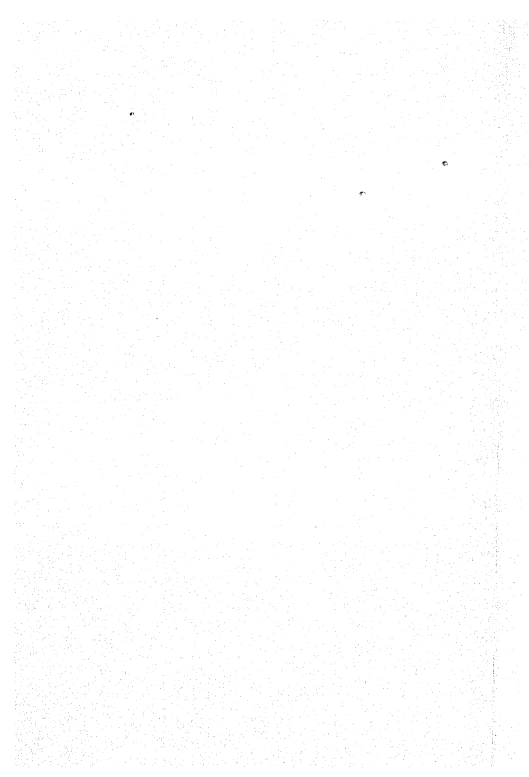
Gladly would I ignore it, if that were possible. But the hucksters' age insists upon breaking into one's dreams. The clamour is everywhere—even in the silences. It is reflected in our cleverness, our smartness, our pushfulness. I walk down the street and it yells at me from the advertising hoardings. It shrieks at me from the columns of the Press, the pages of books, and the frames of pictures; it roars from platform and pulpit, and clatters across the stage. Each individual sound seems to say it is the biggest, or, that, for it is not easy to distinguish clearly, something it has to sell is the biggest. In vain I say that I am not out for the biggest, that I am quite content with the best, and can find that out for myself. Heedless, the noise goes on, until I realise that society has ceased to be a social thing, it has become a strident confusion of rattles of all sizes, each shaking against the other for prizes which demand more noise—the chatter of privilege, the loudness of riches.

But do not imagine that I would substitute a Trappist silence. I have no such desire. My love of sane and healthy sounds is too deep-rooted for that. The noises of our strident age are not healthy: they are a disease, a form of waste. Shouting is not progress, much less discordant shouting. At times I am inclined to the belief that all this noise is a sign of failure, an elegy of despair. The discord of modern life, whether it

## Deserts of Noise

be the roar of the street, the bickering of the Stock Exchange, the shouting of the advertiser—that specialist of noise—or the crowing of fashion, is probably nothing more than the wailing of a lost multitude, of a people who have mislaid life's highway, and, like the blind folk in Maeterlinck's play, are calling pitiful and chimerical directions to each other.

In the meantime I shall resist the temptation of adding my cry to the tumult—no one would hear me. I shall keep quiet, and occasionally retreat under the old archway by Holborn Bars and taste the stillness of Staple Inn. I shall rest awhile on the seat surrounding the centre plane-tree, and reflect securely upon the blind, mad age outside, with which I shall have no traffic.



## XI

### PETERPANTHEISM

WHAT ill turn in the trend of evolution gave man the aspiration to grow up? It must have been an evil chance, for the secret desire of all is for eternal youth. No one surely who had his will of life would dream of growing up, and yet we all not only do it, but succeed in persuading ourselves that we like doing it.

We have even gone so far as to wean the imaginations of children from their rightful heritage and make them wish to become big, like father, or good, like mother. These ambitions are now commonplaces of childish imagination. But in spite of it all, the evidence is still against growing up. The purpose of the child is to live, to feel the mysterious presence of life in every limb, and in so far as he does this he is happy. But the purpose of the adult has become a febrile pursuit of the symbols of life. Real life fills him with dread, and success in his endeavour is his undoing.

Age is a tragedy; and the elderly person strives heroically to make the best of it by covering his retreat with pathetic attempts at superiority and wisdom, little arrogances and vanities which at bottom deceive nobody, not even himself. For well he knows, as he casts wistful glances at the pranks of childhood, that in spite of his imposing cry of "Eureka!" he has found nothing. W

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profit has a man if he gain the whole world but lose his own youth? Perhaps, indeed, it would be more becoming in those who have grown up to admit the fact with fitting lamentation and humility, and, instead of flaunting their age with pomp and circumstance, cover their bodies with sack-cloth and put ashes in their hair.

The great difficulty, however, is that men persist, in spite of bitter experience, in looking upon growing up as a worthy thing. Women are their superiors in this respect. Intuitively they know that age is a *cul-de-sac*, that it leads not even to heaven, for to get there one has to become as a little child. This, probably, is why most women disown the passing years.

Still even they grow up; indeed, are not women always a little older than men? Both nature and society seem to have conspired to make them so. But that is no excuse. Human beings ought not to be content to remain the slaves of either. Surely it is by the constant flouting of such authorities that new variations of life are attained. Neither gods nor millenniums are the outcome of passivity. Therefore, gentlewomen, put by your subterfuges about age, for you have been found out; we know you to be older than we men are, and our immemorial desire is that you should be younger.

Few serious attempts to restore the golden age have been made in modern times, but one of the greatest of these is that of Sir James M. Barrie. *Peter Pan* is more than a Christmas pantomime; it

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is a contribution to religious drama. It is a mystery play, giving significance to the childlike spirit of the universe. Peter Pan is a symbol of eternity, of that complete, unchangeable spirit of the world which is superior to the illusion of growing up: that dim vision which has set bounds to the imagination of humanity ever since the elderly person usurped the throne of the child. *Peter Pan* reminds us again that the world has no final use for grown-up things, that cities and civilisations pass away, that monuments and institutions crumble into dust, that weeds are conquering the Coliseum, and that the life of the immemorial Sphinx is but a matter of time. Peter Pan is the emblem of the mystery of vitality, the thing that is always growing, but never grown.

He came among us some years ago, when our faith in the child had nearly gone. But even to-day we shall see that there is no place for little children in the average home, and that when a place is provided for them it is provided because they are a nuisance and a burden to the grown-ups. It might as well be admitted that children irritate us; and this means that we are no longer capable of entering into their kingdom. We revenge ourselves by teaching them all sorts of worthless knowledge. But we teach them nothing so worthless as this facile art of growing up. That is the final and unforgivable act of our hopelessly bewildered lives. We make our peace with the children by moulding them to our own image; perhaps, one of these days, for all things are



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possible, we shall become wise enough to permit the children to return the compliment.

The desire to make them as we are is the fatal desire of a lost cause. It means that communications with the child-world have been cut off, which is only another way of saying that we have abandoned our alliance with the main tendency of life. We have ceased to grow. We have, in fact, grown up, and are fit only for life's scrap-heap.

We talk of evolution; but half of the idea of evolution is illusion, and the other half the assertion of the child-spirit. It is the child-spirit building castles in the air. And our talk of that little sister of evolution, progress, is not any more helpful; for progress is generally nothing more than a vain endeavour to put the clock forward. The only really vital thing in life is the unconscious abandonment of young things—the spirit of play. And if we think for a moment we shall see that it is play, or the contemplation of play, that gives us most joy. We never tire of watching the play of children or of young animals. That is sane and healthy: there are no better things to watch. Our approval links us with the living world again, just as our love of children does. That is why our delight in young life is always tinged with melancholy. Whilst we approve and love the ways of the young we unconsciously condemn our elderliness. We realise that the most superb adult is a dismal failure beside a child making mud pies or a kitten chasing its tail. But we rarely admit it; when there is a chance of our

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going so far we become frightened, and, shaking ourselves, we murmur something about sentimentality, and speedily commence growing old again, thereby displaying our impotence and our ignorance.

The sign that we have accomplished our ignoble aim, and grown up, is that we no longer have the impulse to play. We go about our business in colourless garments and surroundings, buying and selling and ruling with revolting solemnity. The last glimmering of the spark of play is seen in our shamelessly hiring people to play for us. We hire footballers and cricketers to play games for us, jockeys to ride for us, singers to sing for us, dancers to dance for us, and even pugilists and soldiers to fight for us.

Those who have become as little children will want to do all these things for themselves. They will no more desire to play by proxy than they will desire to live by proxy. Art has been described as the expression of man's joy in his work, and joyful work is the kind of work practised by those who have the courage to be young. It is fundamentally play, and no other kind of work really matters. We have some remote idea of this when we utter the commonplace that success depends largely upon one's doing the work one likes to do. It is also pretty generally recognised that there is no joy in what is merely laborious. Beyond all men the artist knows this; not because his work is easy, but because he is happy in his work. It is a wonderful game. "I pray God

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every day," said Corot, "that He will keep me a child; that is to say, that He will enable me to see and draw with the eye of a child." And France heard him sing as he painted. The childhood of the world was in that song, and in its results.

Children are unconscious artists in living. How to reach this happy state is another matter; precise rules cannot be given, because there are none. Perhaps there is no direct way to the Golden Age, and even if there were, few of us would recognise it. However, there is at least one useful rule—that is, never to look upon the Golden Age as past. For the rest, we might follow Peter Pan, and refuse to grow up.

## XII

### PLAYTHINGS

PLAY is one of the deeper mysteries, and the toy is its symbol. It is a symbol before which all have bowed; it is older than the gods and younger than the latest human invention; packed with the spirit of life it has survived the ages, and full of the same spirit it awaits with invincible patience the ages to come; it has survived all creeds and will survive everything but life. The individual toy may pass away, for fashions change; the day before yesterday it was a wooden doll of Dutch extraction, yesterday it was a calico cat, to-day it is a gollywog or a Teddy bear, to-morrow it will be something else; but these changes are merely the changing of clothes: the essential toy is eternal.

We worship the toy every time we gratify the delight of a child; but our worship is deeper in those fleeting moments when we stand in a place of toys and look wistfully at them with a look full of bashful wonder which reveals a desire born of the remote past, nay, of the eternal present, a desire to buy one for ourselves!

It is as though the soul, after being driven by necessity or by ambition into all manner of solemn, tedious byways of life, suddenly realised, by a magic flash, that all purposes are useless, and that only one thing finally matters. That one thing is play. Some men laugh at this feeling, and put it

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hastily by with a sense of shame. They would not like to be caught playing. Such men are infidels, for play is of the gods.

It is the expression of the creative spirit, the child of joy, and joy is finally the basis of all religions. When we are full of life, when each sense overflows with vitality, then we become prodigal, we scatter ourselves broadcast, we take chances, risk great odds, love, laugh, dance, write poems, paint pictures, romp with children; in short, we play. It is only the impotent who do not play. The people who play are the creators.

The proper name of toys is playthings. They are quite irrational, and their only justification is that they give happiness—and I have yet to learn of anything better worth giving. But in giving happiness they give life, that is why happiness is worth having. When you play you are happy, while you are happy you are in eternity—for happiness annihilates time and space. Children are the greatest players, they follow their instincts which tell them that play is recreation. Even adults call games recreations, but they have almost forgotten what the word means. They have so far forgotten the meaning of it that they have set apart a certain time for play and a certain time for work. All work should be recreation; all work should be play.

Children are always playing when they are healthy—and we who are older might learn wisdom from them. But as a matter of fact we do just the opposite; we even go to considerable

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trouble and spend endless money in teaching children how not to play. At the same time we do not deny that unless we become as little children we can in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven. But we are not lost to all hope: we have not sunk to the lowest depths, because we still look upon at least one feast in the year as a festival of play. When we fill our youngsters' stockings with toys on the eve of Yule we pour libations on the altar of the true faith.

No one ever performs an act without becoming part of that act. We are the reflections of the things we do. So when we join in the great ritual of the festival of toys we recreate in ourselves something of the spirit of the joyous children who are the recipients of our bounty. We feel not only benefit from the giving, but from the gift. When we walk through the stored bazaars at Yuletide and hear the babel of sounds, children's eager voices clamouring with the voices of toy dolls and animals, raucous gramophones shouting musical boxes, and all the merry noises of Toyland, we are communicants in a great sacrament.

The happy bewilderment we feel at such times is one of the most genuine of all human feelings. It is really a harking back to the child-spirit. We are turning our dull, grown-up wits into the main current of life. A revolution is going on in our spirits—we must not arrest it, for we are becoming as little children.

It is indeed remarkable, and even hopeful, that

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we grown-ups ever do choose aright. It is no easy matter to enter into the ideals of a child at any time, and when we stand in Toyland surrounded by all the bizarre fetishes of childhood, which the stern laws of our workaday lives condemn as absurd, it is a wonder that we do not wish to sweep the whole bauble shop into eternity. But we do not do this. We, for a brief space, become absurd. Happy is the man who can thus make a fool of himself. The world is saved by such acts.

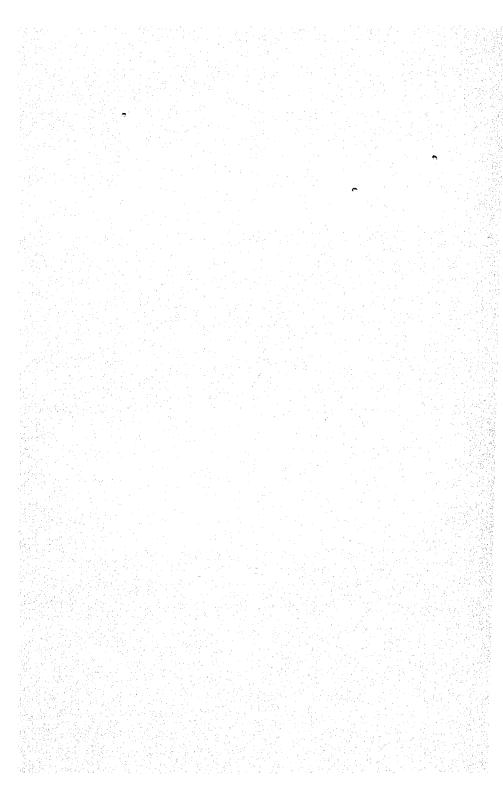
How easy it is to vote "straight," or to do a deal in cotton or corn, or even to buy Consols for the rise which does not always occur at the appointed moment! But when it comes to a deal in toys, you are up against a new game. It is no easy matter to decide whether little Miss Five-year-old will prefer a gollywog or a Teddy bear, or to speculate on the measure of appreciation some lady of ten years would accord to the pink curves of a dainty rogue in celluloid, in comparison with the more graceful charms of some aristocratic doll from Paris, with immaculate cork stuffing, kid limbs, real hair, and elegant mutable joints. Before such deep questions the trials of commerce pass into nothingness.

Our difficulties are due to inexperience, and these are largely modified when we have to deal with boys. A ball, the greatest of all symbols of play, even a grown-up can appreciate, and we can even see more fun in a toy railway system, steamship, or waggon and horses.

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The truest test, however, lies in our capacity for appreciating the irrational playthings. We must be uplifted at the rotund absurdity of Humpty-Dumpty. Gollywog must fill us with wonder and delight. Teddy bear must be our big game. A horse whose body is a stick upon two wheels must be our charger. Noah's Ark must be our Zoo, and a Caran d'Ache, rather than the Kennel Club, must decide the points of our dog! We must, in conclusion, not only administer to the child, we must look through the eyes of a child. For children see very clearly, and their play is more serious than our work, and more important. An awakening of a true delight in toys will be the signal to play—and play in the last resort is prayer. Therefore, let us play.





### XIII

## FESTIVAL OF GIFTS.

I OFTEN wonder how long society would hold together if the ideal of thrift were pushed to its logical conclusion; it would not hold together very long, I feel certain, for saving is farther removed from vitality than spending. He who spends well saves, and even he who spends ill saves more than he who saves all. Most people believe this, and old sayings like "'Tis better to give than to receive" are accepted as truisms. In the mysterious natural economy of social life, generosity must be taken as the basis of our traffic with one another, otherwise the social fabric, or what is worth having of it, would quickly fall to pieces. But at the same time we are all too eager to take the ancient saying that 'tis better to give than to receive, "as read." Our acceptance is so complete that the act of giving has been degraded into a charitable convention, or else entirely suspended. We seem to recognise this failing once in a twelvemonth, when, at Yuletide, the year dies in a burst of splendid generosity. Yuletide has become the symbol of giving, the Feast of Gifts.

It is the season of penance for past niggardliness. It is the appointed hour for the payment of the only genuine debts, the unconscious and inevitable indebtedness of one human being to another. At Yuletide men realise with more unanimity than

## Festival of Gifts

at any other time their interdependence, their common humanity. Their generosity droppeth as the gentle dew from heaven upon the just and the unjust alike. Distinctions are cast aside, worthiness is out of count, recompense is not expected. They reward each other for being human, for having like desires and similar needs. Humanity becomes a nation.

This spirit is traditional. It has its origin far back in the pagan days, when Yuletide foreran Christmastide, when the pastoral folk gave thanks to the Sun for his bounty, linking the arm of fellowship one with another as a sign of the desired union of hearts. And these early feasts were but the expression of a still more remote recollection of the kinship of man in the lonely spaces of the world.

It is all very well for specially constituted philosophers to deny loneliness, as Thoreau did, because, forsooth, our planet was in the Milky Way! Such pious imaginings will never suffice for the great mass of humanity. We may cast our love up to the stars to our own infinite advantage, but I doubt very much whether we or the stars are affected by the performance. There is only one star, so far as we have any information, that is affected by our love, and that is the star which no man has ever seen shining in the night: the planet Earth. Wheeling through space, she reciprocates the love of men because it is the point at which her love of self becomes conscious. It is this primal thing, this

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earth-love, which informs all great festival. No matter how degraded a festival become, the spirit at its heart can never be finally eradicated; and not till the joy of life itself be dead can the inner mystery of Yuletide, though snowed under no matter how many vulgarities and insincerities, be a thing of indifference.

All this seems very reasonable. But the Christmas spirit is not reasonable at all. Standing apart from it you can explain and diagnose; you can trace its descent from "the dim red dawn of man," but after all, that is a mere act of erudition or mental ingenuity, valuable enough as a tag upon which to hang your conception of a thing. But to Santa Claus and his laughing host of gift-gathering parents, sons, daughters, and lovers, romping through Shopland during the joyful crescendo of Christmas week, such ideas are inconsiderable. The bewildered looks on the shining philanthropic faces of the Christmas shoppers are not caused by futile endeavours to track down the remote origins of the impulses which brought them into this wild jungle of gifts. Paterfamilias is pleasantly worried by no primal theory, but by a primal need, as he tries to decide between the pleasure-giving propensities of a toy railway system and a rocking-horse; and the young mother who resists the solicitations of a two-foot-three golliwog, because it will not go into baby's stocking, is filled with a much more subtle emotion than he who endeavours to trace the evolution of the Yuletide spirit.

## Festival of Gifts

Christmas is quite irrational, for that reason it cannot die. For just one week a new currency is in operation. Of course, people do pay for things, but it were unkind to think the keepers of toys and the masters of the great bazaars expected payment. They would all far rather give just in the same spirit as you are going to give. That a small charge is made is a symbol of our low estate. They at least try to sell you things in the spirit of presentation. This is brought out in some instances, when the fine feeling of certain toy merchants has taken the form of providing means for what really amounts to surreptitious payment. At the bottom of their hearts they know that to receive money for commodities during Christmas week is a vulgar necessity—almost an irregular commission. So some of them have built wonderful grottos, or other semblances of Fairyland, wherein you enter, if you are young enough, with some kindly adult who secretly pays an entrance fee, and you meet Santa Claus himself unburdening himself of wondrous coloured parcels containing untold treasures. And to my own knowledge there are halls of dazzling brightness, full of the desired things of all the earth, where no one is asked to buy; where you may walk down avenues full of strange beasts and weird persons, elephants and tigers, Teddy bears, jabberwocks, Humpty-Dumpties, and golliwogs; dolls of all nations, and all the wonders of science from locomotives to aeroplanes; and where the air is full of merry sounds: the persevering harmony of the

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gramophone, and that music of the spheres, the happy laughter of children.

I know quite well that, again if you are young enough—for you remember that it is necessary to become as a little child before you can enter the kingdom of heaven—if you are quite young enough then, and like any particular thing well enough, that thing is quite certain to be either in your stocking or on your bed on Christmas morning. There are many authentic instances; one quite fresh in my own experience is that in which an elephant was miraculously translated from the town to the suburbs in this way without any obvious payment!

And are not the bankers also in the happy conspiracy? Do they not, during this impossible week, distribute bright new money, obviously made to be given away? Fresh threepenny pieces to add to the flavour of the Christmas pudding; star-like sixpences and shillings for errand boys who come mysteriously into your life at this season; moon-like florins and crowns for postmen and policemen who, like new planets, swim into your ken on Christmas morning; fresh, bright sovereigns, so gorgeous that they look worth at least twenty-five shillings, for rich uncles and deserving nephews; and last of all, those new pennies, bright and beautiful as four-pound pieces, made expressly for distribution among street urchins and beggars, vendors of "waxlights" and newspapers. It were profanation to use such splendid coinage for any purpose save these.

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And later comes the good cheer, the best gift of all, the sanctification of all presents. Without this all the rest were as naught, and the Festival of Gifts nothing but a weariness of the flesh. In the festival of Yule we raise the gift to a higher level. We give ourselves. This is the consummation of the gift of life itself, and "the moral of it is," as the Duchess used to say to Alice, that sooner or later we shall learn that there is no reason why this special form of present should be confined to one season, to almost one day. The currency of good fellowship and good cheer now peculiar to Christmas Day may yet be consecrated upon many other days, upon the other three hundred and sixty-four, for instance. Why not?

## XIV

### THE SPIRIT OF THE DANCE

It is impossible to describe a great dancer or a great dance—I mean in words. It can be done in music, and Degas and one or two others have done it in paint. More particularly is it beyond the art of letters to describe Pavlova. There is nothing upon which words can hang themselves; she is intangible as air, as light and as wonderful. Genée, Polaire, and Isidora Duncan are also great dancers, but it is easier to capture some of their characteristics in a noose of words, because they have that something which we call individuality. They are dancers of a kind, individualists of dancing; personality dominates their art.

Pavlova is dancing incarnate; she is all the others in one; she is the very spirit of the dance, neither classical, traditional, nor modern, but all three—an ever-changing trinity of enraptured motion. She does not make you think of herself; she sets you dreaming of all the dancing that has ever been, of all the dancing that is. Whilst watching her I could not help thinking she was not merely following the rules of an art, but that she was following the rules of life. The leaves dance in the breeze, the flowers dance in the sun, the worlds dance in space, and Pavlova dancing is a part of this cosmic measure.

Everybody in the theatre must have felt some-



# The Spirit of the Dance

thing similar—especially when she and Michael Mordkin, her superb consort in the art, danced together the *Bacchanale* of Glazounov. I imagine also those dim segments of faces in the darkened auditorium, many of them reflecting the frigid morality of English respectability, would be touched to strange emotions. Their staid owners would feel a new wakefulness, recalling as in a dream all that had ever happened to them of passion or beauty, all that might have happened to them had they followed their real desires, their sacred whims. You could indeed feel the heart of the audience in its very happiness linking itself with memory and regret, for in the very temple of delight, as Keats knew, veiled Melancholy hath her sovran shrine.

But for myself, regret was ever tinged with a fuller joy. I felt all the laughter of the world coursing through me; I was pulled back into a younger period, when men and gods were on speaking terms with one another:

“ And as I sat, over the light blue hills  
There came a noise of revellers: the rills  
Into the wide stream came of purple hue—  
’Twas Bacchus and his crew!  
The nearest trumpet spake, and silver thrills  
From kissing cymbals made a merry din—  
’Twas Bacchus and his kin!  
Like to a moving vintage down they came,  
Crowned with green leaves, and faces all on flame;  
All madly dancing through the pleasant valley,  
To scare thee, Melancholy! ”

The swaying form of Pavlova rhymed and

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romped with life and joy, with love and beauty. O the wild flight across the stage, the hot pursuit, the sweet dalliance, and then the rich luxury of capture and supreme surrender! The very essence of life was there: life so full of joy that it overflowed with blissful abandonment until it sank from the only pardonable excess—excess of happiness.

She dances with soul as well as body; her beautiful slight form is but the instrument upon which she plays the psalm of life. And her face dances too, dances in joy and fear, in surrender, and in the rapture of accomplished passion. She is the first dancer I have seen whose face also dances. Rarely does one see such a vivid facial expression of absolute joy, never before in a dancer. Most other dancers' faces are too preoccupied with their steps. Pavlova looks as if she has no preoccupations—she just lives. For her there is neither future nor past, only the mad rhythmic present.

That really is what dancing should be. Dancing is rhythmic life. When life is most intense, when it is master of its own destiny, then it sways and rhymes and dances, it becomes lyrical. Dancing is the song of the body, the lyric of form. It bears the same relation to motion as the flower does to the plant: it is a phase of efflorescence, a sign of ripeness. William Blake got very near the heart of this mysterious thing when he said, "Exuberance is Beauty."

People only dance when they feel the exuber-

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ance of life coursing through their veins. And there is a very real link between the *Danse Bacchanale* of Pavlova and Michael Mordkin and the circling scamper of the children on the village green to the delicious eternal nonsense of:

" Here we dance—Looby Loo!  
And here we dance—Looby Light!  
Here we dance—Looby Lum!  
All on a Saturday night! "

But the conventional measures of the modern ballroom are not dancing: they are as far removed from the spirit of dance as an orgy in a modern gin-palace is from a festival of Dionysos. The ballroom is a fashion, like rinking, and it will go the way of all fashions. It is a kill-time for those who are too weary to live, an amusement for those who have no life to spare, for people whose vitality is exhausted or atrophied. Now and then you do see a bit of genuine dancing in a ballroom: two lovers are mysteriously moved by some strain in a common waltz tune, and they begin to dance. But a whisper immediately goes round the room, starting from the dowagers' chairs, where elderliness is stamping on happiness, and the burst of exuberance is called improper.

Far otherwise is it, however, in the "sixpenny hops" of those who have no respectability to maintain. In the reeking atmosphere of the dancing-rooms of the East End you will see dancing that has little art, but much life. It is gross and graceless, but it possesses what the ballroom lacks—passion, joy. I often think that our com-

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fortable middle-class people should not attempt to dance. They no longer live: their ideals are money, appearance, prestige, and these things have nothing to do with life. It is only those who have never had or who have long since abandoned such ideals that can dance: children, simple peasant folk, common East End Cockneys, and the elect—those who create, those who have the exuberance which is life and beauty. But the rest are still fortunate, for just as they live by proxy, so can they dance by proxy. Pavlova and the great dancers are very kind—they will dance before them, if not exactly for them.

"I will only believe in a God who can dance," said Nietzsche; and those who are alive to the real issues of life will be with him. One should dance because the soul dances. Indeed, when one thinks of it, what are any real things but dances? I mean the only realities—moments of joy, acts of pleasure, deeds of kindness. Even the long silences, the deep quietness of serene souls, are dances; that is why they seem so motionless. When the top dances most perfectly it seems most still; just as the apparently still earth is dancing round itself and round the sun; just as the stars dance in the night. All art is a dance; the painter is but a ballet-master marshalling the dance of light and colour; a poem is a dance of words; music a dance of tones. And why, therefore, should we not have gods that dance? Perhaps Pavlova and her sisters in the great art will teach them.

## The Spirit of the Dance

But maybe they dance already, only we cannot see them. Who knows? Let us not forget that religion and dance have often gone hand in hand. There have been many guesses at the riddle of life, and there will be many more; for mystery still lies around us and about—it lies within us and above, it throws dust in our eyes, and lays in our path barricades that seem invincible. But we shall not cease striving to peer through that veil of dust, to mount those barricades: to light the lamp of vision, after our own manner. I also shall guess. Indeed I have done so a thousand times, as which of us has not? Sometimes I fancy life is nothing after all but a glorious dance, a carnival of motion beginning in dance, continuing in dance; and when the end comes it is but a signal from the Master of the Ballet that the dance shall begin again, for there is no end. Yes, there can be no further doubt, the gods are always dancing, and the great dancers are among the true prophets.

## MASTERS OF NONSENSE

I DO not think it is good for any one to be always sensible. Not that anyone is always sensible—on the contrary; but most of us think we are. It is from this illusion that we require a holiday, in fact, several holidays, and, were I autocrat, I should make such holidays periodical, like the festivals of the Church; for, as Sir Thomas Browne says, “Many things are true in Divinity, which are neither inducible by reason, nor confirmable by sense.” Doubtless I shall be almost alone in this amiable wish, since we live in a practical and business-like age, and have little time to cut capers. Material success is our aim, and nonsense has nothing whatever to do with that aim. Nonsense is shy of success, even of its own; and I believe this shyness is due to certain delicate and even fairylike qualities which are apt to become soiled in the market-place—as what thing does not? One of the inevitable results of a strenuously material era is the brushing away of the more subtle and illusive qualities of life; these suffer at the hands of popular success as butterflies’ wings suffer at the hands of him who is vandal enough to touch them. There is also an arrogance of material success—a swagger of certainty born of pride in accumulated substance—which spoils the taste for finer things. Those

afflicted thus, for it is an affliction, surrounded though they are by what the world calls great possessions, possess naught. This is true not only of a man but of an age, for a man, whatever he may be, is, finally, the epitome of his age. The possession of a great many things, even the best of things, tends to blind one to the real value of anything. And the humour, and the pathos as well, of such an age as ours, which values a man according to the number of more or less troublesome things he possesses, is that it places what is called good sense above what is called nonsense. "Be sensible" is the advice we are all giving one another. And I think we are agreed that to be sensible is to be rational, shrewd, useful, proper, respectable, and even honest—when there is no great risk in our being otherwise. "Honesty," we say, "is the *best* policy." You see there is no nonsense about honesty being good in itself—it is simply *the best policy*, that is all.

This good sense would be called an English characteristic; it has made us what we are, it has made us rich (at least some of us)—the kind of richness typified so frankly in the popular pictures of John Bull; the kind of richness that made Napoleon sneer at us for a nation of shopkeepers. And we have little doubt that this sense is good sense, since it has given us those fine things, factories and ironclads, locomotives and guns, and banking accounts. But still, it would seem, and in spite of all these sensible things, that there are some things, in every sense their direct oppo-

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sites, which bear a more convincing mark of immortality than the ingenious material achievements so much admired to-day. My modern and successful reader will, of course, say, "Nonsense!" And I shall not contradict him. It is nonsense, deliberate, unadulterated nonsense, but I am disposed to believe it is all the better for that. And, as if the Fates were on my side, is it not a little strange that this most sensible of all ages, this age of practical rationalism, should have invented, in the pauses of its pursuit of fleeting things, an art of nonsense? Maybe it is a reaction, but reaction is only bad when it throws back towards what is monstrous and unnecessary; but even if, say, the invention of the nonsense verse is reactionary, it is wisely so, for it reacts somewhat after the manner of a boomerang. It is our age laughing at itself, pulling wry faces at itself, if you will, realising perhaps shyly and without courage that this civilisation of ours is rather a joke, and perhaps a little top-heavy with seriousness.

There is undoubtedly some deeper relationship between what is called good sense and nonsense, something deeper than the popular conception of these things as the obverse and reverse of the same medal. If, for instance, we took longevity as the test of worthiness, nonsense would be found to rank higher than sense. And I, at least, should be forced to a similar conclusion were I to judge nonsense as a creator of disinterested happiness. But there are so many things in favour of non-



sense that I should not be in the least surprised if, one of these days, that much-abused faculty were judged to be the final and consummate expression of sense, a kind of Nirvana of the intelligence. We even get a hint of this in our own sensible civilisation; for, just as we have seen our national symbol is a rather gross and tubby person called John Bull, distinguished only by reason of his uncomfortable girth, so the most characteristic human product of our age is the millionaire. Surely these Falstaffs of finance are the climax of the sensible line of evolution, and, like all extremes, have met their opposites, though they have not yet admitted it! But to avoid the charge of trifling with modern ideals, I shall not pursue this line of thought any further. Besides, are there not happier phases of my theme?

One of these is the significant way in which those most exalted and nonsensical of creatures, our poets and dreamers, have often been evolved out of such sensible persons as mathematicians or even more laboriously learned people. Take the case of Edgar Allan Poe, who was a mathematical genius, and something of a conchologist. He might have remained a sensible devotee of science, only his genius was too much for him. It forced him to consider less rational things, and before it was too late he turned from the temple of mathematics and knocked at the door of the Muses, with results that have placed him in the forefront of the world's imaginative workers. There are many such instances in the annals of literary history.

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And there are other instances of men, like Rabelais and Dean Swift, who, possessing the intuition of artists, have used the language of nonsense to express the idea of sense, who have bedecked rational satire in irrational clothing; but Time, after his manner, stripping away the causes of the irony with the passing of the years, has treated with tender care the nonsensical form in which that irony was enshrined; thus dropping a kindly veil of forgetfulness over the crabbed words of ages that are gone. Time has touched to immortality the conceptions of Gargantua, Pantagruel, and Gulliver, leaving us to-day unmoved by any other quality but their fantastic charm.

But stranger still, and here history plays into my hands with something approaching magnanimity, the deliberate creators of nonsense for the sake of nonsense have turned to that noble work from what was acknowledged by their contemporaries to have been sound and sensible work; but in spite of all offers of financial reward, and other temptations, they became masters of nonsense, and their whimsical ideas and images have given delight not only to past generations but to the present, and there is every sign that they will continue to give delight to many, and perhaps all, generations to come; for nonsense rarely dies. Let me take but three examples of this type of genius: Lewis Carroll, Hans Andersen, and Edward Lear. The first of these was the creator of that classic of nonsense, "Alice in Wonderland," and yet how strange it is to think that

Alice was a mere incident—an accident really—in a life which might easily have lost itself in a morass of theology and mathematics. Doubtless he took himself more seriously as the Rev. C. L. Dodgson, mathematician and theologian, than as Lewis Carroll, creator of Alice; but who shall say that he did not touch infinity in the latter capacity? His mathematics, upon which he prided himself, will be forgotten (even Euclid is becoming *passé*); his theology, which, doubtless, was much to him, will be dead: but Jabberwocky, the Mad Hatter, the Duchess, the Mock Turtle and the Gryphon, and all their jolly fellows, will prance merrily down the ages, cutting happy capers for happy children and happier adults, until the crack o' doom.

Just as Lewis Carroll took himself seriously as a mathematician, so Hans Andersen took himself seriously as a novelist. But the spirit of Eternity judges neither one nor the other by such standards; Eternity has touched neither their mathematics nor their novels with his magic wand. That wand has waved and descended gently upon Alice; and it has waved with like immortal results over "The Ugly Duckling," "The Tinder Box," and "The Wild Swans."

But the most remarkable of all nonsense-artists is Edward Lear; if the rest are masters of nonsense, he is surely our Prince of Nonsense. He has raised nonsense, nonsense pure and simple, nonsense free of all sense, morals, and prettiness, to the heights of great art. His work is the very

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apotheosis of nonsense; he is "the prophet of the utterly absurd, of the patently impossible and vain."

His world was peopled with men and animals that never were on sea or land; strange lights flared in his dreams, showing us a realm of prank here in the very heart of our rational day. He has given us the keys of the heaven of nonsense, and as we turn them in the doors and enter therein we breathe lightly and without care of the morrow, as though we were one with a rout of children dancing and shouting:

"Sally go round the moon!  
Sally go round the sun!  
Sally go round the chimney-pot  
On a Sunday afternoon."

And, characteristically, again, he raised himself to that eminence in the spare moments of a busy career devoted to the most obviously sensible things.

He permitted many years of a life, which might have been entirely devoted to nonsense, to be dissipated in ornithological studies and in the drawing and painting of birds and landscapes. Probably, like Lewis Carroll, he was prouder of his learned work on "The Family of the Psittacidae" than of "The Pobble who has no Toes." But, as it was in the cases of Lewis Carroll and Hans Andersen, the judgment of Time is against him.

Still, in spite of other endeavour, Edward Lear is the first to have made a fine art of nonsense. His work in that direction is irresponsibly defiant

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of all the scaffolding by which the intellect is supported, and though one is carried away on the wings of a chuckling fascination as one reads through his verses or looks at their illustrations, one is filled with a disturbing, mystical, yet exhilarating feeling that something unusual is happening, that a new sort of wisdom is being enunciated, a new order of life being revealed in this scamper of the wits. It is as though a dignified ritual, long become exanimate by repetition, had suddenly been reversed by an unseen but jocular power, and creating, instead of shallow laughter, fathomless joy.

Take his autobiographical verses, for example, and, sheer nonsense as they are, how much clearer a conception of the personality of Lear do they give us than any more sensible account of him could have done?

“ How pleasant to know Mr. Lear!

Who has written such volumes of stuff!

Some think him ill-tempered and queer,

But a few think him pleasant enough.

His mind is concrete and fastidious,

His nose is remarkably big;

His visage is more or less hideous,

His beard it resembles a wig.

He has ears, and two eyes, and ten fingers,

Leastways if you reckon two thumbs;

Long ago he was one of the singers,

But now he is one of the dumbs.

He sits in a beautiful parlour,

With hundreds of books on the wall;

He drinks a great deal of Marsala,

But never gets tipsy at all.

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He has many friends, laymen and clerical;  
Old Foss is the name of his cat;  
His body is perfectly spherical,  
He weareth a runcible hat.

He reads but he cannot speak Spanish,  
He cannot abide ginger-beer:  
Ere the days of his pilgrimage vanish,  
How pleasant to know Mr. Lear! "

Much of Edward Lear's work in the realm of nonsense is in the verse which has become the established medium of nonsensical utterance:

" There was an old man who supposed  
The street door was partially closed,  
But some very large rats  
Ate his coat and his hats  
While the futile old gentleman dozed."

But Edward Lear's most masterly work does not lie in the classical nonsense verse, nor yet in those delightfully futile sketches by means of which he illustrated his books of nonsense. Rather is it to be found in that series of ballads which, for whimsical fancy and deliberate abandonment of all reasonableness, stands matchless and supreme, the very negation of the rationale of things.

The finest of these ballads is certainly "The Pelican Chorus," although its excellence does not lie so entirely in the domain of nonsense as in the setting of the quality of nonsense in picturesque surroundings. The chorus itself, whimsical though it is, translates what ought to be Pelicanese into a kind of pidgin-English, which one can easily imagine to be the nearest approxima-

tion in human language of the thoughts and emotions of the pelican. There is, in fact, as the reader will readily comprehend, a strong resemblance between the personal appearance of the pelican and the quaint words of the chorus, and if it is the expression of the unseen self, then the natural historical truth of the chorus is obvious:

“ Ploffskin, Pluffskin, Pelican jee!  
 We think no birds so happy as we!  
 Plumpskin, Ploshkin, Pelican jill!  
 We think so then, and we thought so still! ”

Yes, when Lear tells me of the assembling of these impossible birds on their “ long bare islands of yellow sand,” I am convinced that, whether they sing this pleasant verse or not, it is quite obvious that they ought to do so; and it is an oversight on the part of nature if they do not. But I am somewhat at a disadvantage in the matter. I cannot speak with authority, because my experience of pelicans is confined to those at the Zoo. They certainly did not quote Lear. But what would you expect of creatures that live in a paddock? And now I come to think of it, I noticed that each of those curious guests of the Royal Zoological Society did wear the absorbed expression peculiar to people who want to catch some thought which has just slipped the memory. Captivity had evidently afflicted them with aphasia, just as it afflicts many other creatures of our civilisation. The pelicans at the Zoo are sad birds, and now I know why—they are trying to recollect “ The Pelican Chorus,” which

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dangles in their memories just beyond grasping-point.

For the highest nonsense, however, we must turn to the immortal "Pobble who has no Toes":

"The Pobble who has no toes  
Had once as many as we;  
When they said, 'Some day you may lose them all';—  
He replied, 'Fish fiddle de-dee!'  
And his Aunt Jobiska made him drink  
Lavender water tinged with pink,  
For she said, 'The World in general knows,  
There's nothing so good for a Pobble's toes!'"

and to the equally great "Mr. and Mrs. Discobolos,"

"Mr. and Mrs. Discobolos  
Climbed to the top of a wall,  
And they sat to watch the sunset sky,  
And to hear the Nupiter Piffkin cry,  
And the Biscuit Buffalo call.  
They took up a roll and some camomile tea,  
And both were as happy as happy could be—  
Till Mrs. Discobolos said,—  
'Oh! W! X! Y! Z!  
It has just come into my head—  
Suppose we should happen to fall!!!  
Darling Mr. Discobolos!'"

and to "The Quangle Wangle's Hat":

"On the top of the Crumpetty Tree  
The Quangle Wangle sat,  
But his face you could not see,  
On account of his beaver Hat!  
For his hat was a hundred and two feet wide,  
With ribbons and bibbons on every side,  
And bells, and buttons, and loops, and lace,  
So that nobody ever could see the face  
Of the Quangle Wangle Quee."



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In these three poems Edward Lear is seen at his best. In these poems one meets all those strange creations of his which meet their peers only in the Jabberwock and the Mock Turtle of Lewis Carroll. You are introduced to them all at once, for all of them meet at a grand re-union on the amazing hat of the still more amazing and mysterious Quangle Wangle. The Fimble Fowl, with the corkscrew leg:

“ And the Golden Grouse came there,  
And the Pobble who has no toes—  
And the small Olympian Bear—  
And the Dong, with the luminous nose:  
And the Blue Baboon, who played the flute,  
And the Orient Calf from the Land of Tute,  
And the Attery Squash and the Bisky Bat,  
All came and built on the lovely hat  
Of the Quangle Wangle Quee.”

There is an exalted futility about these poems suggestive of things as final and as certain as any imaginable. One cannot explain them, they baffle and elude and convince like

“ ’Twas brillig, and the slithy toves  
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;  
All mimsy were the borogoves,  
And the mome raths outgrabe.”

Who are all these strange creatures, and why do they enter into our consciousness against all reason? Why do we sympathise as deeply with the absurd whimsies of Mr. and Mrs. Discobolos as we do with the adventures of Mr. Pickwick or the love of Lucy Desborough for Richard Feverel? Why should the incomprehensible

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Pobble creep into our lives on such a wave of sympathy? Or why, to take another expression of nonsense, should we have a deeper if more furtive regard for Jabberwocky than we have for the language of Shakespeare? Such questions are as difficult as Pilate's "What is truth?"

These things are nonsense, unquestionably, but, as the lady in *Patience* says: "Oh, what precious nonsense!" But nonsense does not always find expression in the same way. We even see hints of it in certain of the phenomena of wild life. Nature was certainly working in the same vein, though expressing it through a different medium, when she created the Gecko, the Duckbill Platypus, and the Tortoise; but it is a moot point whether even she improves upon the Quangle Wangle Quee.

But in spite of it all, nonsense is one of the few things modern learning does not attempt to explain. Nonsense exists; it is delightful: that is all. Furthermore, it is not sense, and perhaps therefore we should rejoice in the fact that it has escaped learned analysis; not even Nonsense could withstand that.

In the hands of Edward Lear and his followers it is becoming not only proud of its isolation, but self-assertive, articulate, and, like the mind of Mr. Lear, "concrete and fastidious."

We are all, in fact, beginning to find, as Alice did, that what sounds like nonsense is no ground for objection. You will remember how she was making up her mind to run to meet the Red

Queen in the reasonable way of going forward, for the Red Queen was ahead of her. "You can't possibly do that," said the Rose. "I should advise you to walk the other way." Alice refused to follow this advice, and speedily lost herself, and it was not until she acted upon the nonsensical that she eventually met the Red Queen.

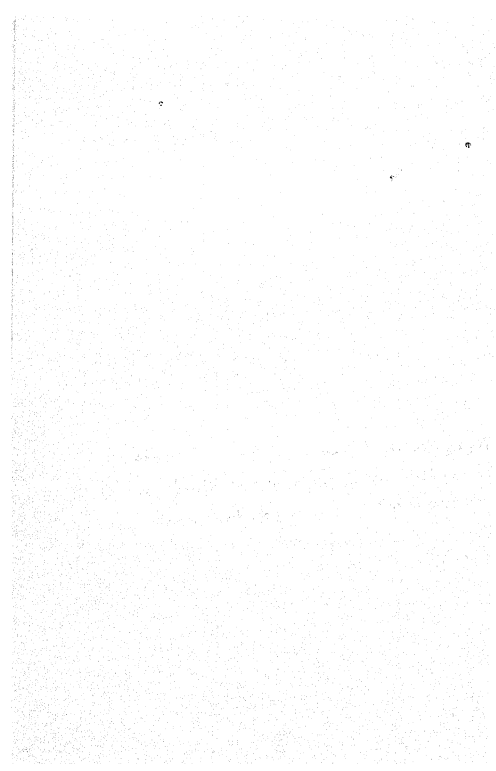
This adventure in Wonderland might well serve as a parable, a hint of that higher thing than sense lying hidden in the heart of the absurd. We know the legend of Punch is a laughing tragedy truer than our truth, and on the same lines there may be long vistas of intelligence, whole realms of consciousness, whose nature mere sense cannot penetrate. Nonsense may be the striving of consciousness towards newer ways of expressing life; it may indicate the final breakdown of intellect and reason, and the beginning of a fresh idea, the childhood of a new world; the proof, in fact, of man's unwritten belief that what can be proved is not worth proving.

Man is an irrational creature, and the essence of the human comedy is concerned with his attempts to be otherwise. Doubtless the comedy will continue—there will be no last act. So I do not look to nonsense as one looks to some reforming or revolutionary power. It is not that. Indeed, I am not so sure that I would alter the human comedy; I might wish it more varied—but on the whole it is good enough until we are more conscious of its purpose. Nonsense has

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nothing to do with progress; it is as unchanging as it is uncertain, as young as it is old. Its value lies in its futility. But by showing us the absurdity of things, nonsense may help to keep us usefully sane; by checking ultimate consistency it may help to keep us alive.

Jagannatha  
Ponson



## LORDS OF WHIM

MODERN society is a curious tangle of conflicting ideas, sentiments, and interests; and for that reason it gains in rapidity of movement what it loses in old-fashioned dignity. It possesses, for instance, none of that high serenity we associate with the Greek spirit. The aim of the Greeks was to connect ideas with common affairs. That was the meaning of all their great discussions. Athens at its best was a discussion towards such an end. No thought, not even the most sublime, is complete in itself, and the value of an idea can only be determined by the test of practice. The aim of the modern world should be the marriage of idea and action. The worship of abstract ideas, be they never so beautiful, must end. The day of the pedant is over. We are tired of his chatter. He is barren. Beauty, Freedom, Love, Art, have all withered in his hands; they have faded not for lack of argument—they have had abundance of that—but for lack of exercise. Let us rescue what remains from the pernicious influence before it is too late.

. The evils of this separation of ideas from life are nowhere more apparent than in the use, or rather abuse, of the idea of Freedom. We are all devotees of Freedom: it is a dominant word in

our literature. It is waved like a banner from a thousand political platforms every year, to the thunderous acclamation of hundreds of thousands of people who firmly believe themselves to be free. It is a word that thrills us like new love; it is a word for which we have made great sacrifice; it is a word over which we have broken heads and spilt blood. But tattered and torn though it be, like a flag which has been through many battles, dabbled with blood though it be and stained with tears, it still remains merely a word, a great mystical word nevertheless, yet hardly of any value to those who have it flaunted before them on so many occasions. It is like a fire-balloon, admirable and beautiful in the air, but incapable of descending to earth. Freedom has become a fetish; a thing to be praised, to be patted on the back, to be adored, but not to be practised. You may burst into song about Freedom, but you may not be free.

But even worse things than lip service have happened to Freedom. Things have been called free which are not free. There are innumerable people who imagine Freedom to be synonymous with political liberty. Such people are blind or stupid. What else can we say of those who take the chaff and throw away the golden grain? Political liberty is but one of the instruments of Freedom; it can never be anything more. Real Freedom begins deep down in the consciousness of the individual; it is the stuff of variation and growth, the fuel of life. "Freedom is the will

# Lords of Whim

to be responsible for oneself," and anyone who interferes with that responsibility is an enemy of Freedom.

More than a generation ago John Stuart Mill, in a noble essay, set forth the uses of Freedom. His essay was both a lesson and a warning, but it is doubtful whether we have learnt the one, and certain that we have ignored the other. He saw clearly that constant interference with the desire for individual expression would inevitably lead to the destruction of the principle of growth in society; and, although he laid considerable stress upon political despotism and the need for its removal, he was even more emphatic when he came to what Henry Thomas Buckle called "the despotism of custom." It is in that direction that we have ignored his gospel. We have claimed and attained more political liberty than we know how to use. But we are still warped and checked by the despotism of custom. Kings and elected persons are no longer the real enemies of society. The real enemies of society are custom and precedent. These are laughing in their impotent, cynical way at every effort towards Freedom. They have enthroned themselves on the seats of government. They dictate the laws and punish the defaulters. They have actually become the State, and under their rule society is losing its gaiety, its charm, its vitality; and the loss of these things means the loss of the only treasures known to man. The despots of custom have substituted boredom for gaiety;



loudness and vulgarity for charm; and, for vitality, feverishness and morbidity. *discreetly*

Nobody likes this change, but few are free to announce their dislikes, and those who are free are not brave. It requires something like religious valour to follow your inner consciousness to its last whim and eccentricity; for that is what Freedom means. It is easy to do the thing everybody is doing; it requires no thought, no faith, no effort. And here I beg of you not to misunderstand me: I do not want to rob people of the freedom to do what others are doing. Everybody requires that Freedom, and many will require no other. The Freedom I advocate includes that Freedom as well. It is necessary that everybody shall be free to do as they like, to follow their own inclinations in whatsoever direction they please, in so far as their action does not interfere with a like Freedom in others.

Mill denied the right of society, whether acting by legislative influence or by the influence of public opinion, to interfere with the conduct of any individual for the sake of his own good. But what is one man's meat is another's poison; there is no rule for correcting the appetites of man. He must learn by experience. Society, then, may interfere with him for its own good, but not for his. "If his actions hurt them, he is, under certain circumstances, amenable to their authority; if they only hurt himself, he is never amenable."

That is the only way to preserve those precious

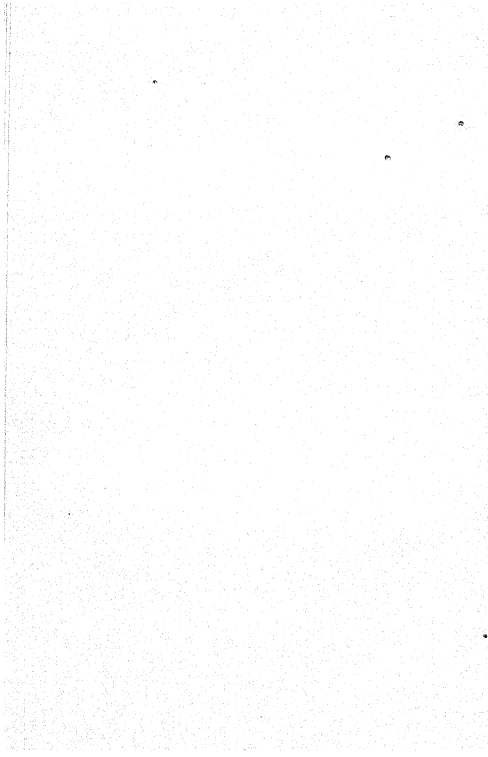
## Lords of Whim

and inestimable qualities which go to the making of individuality, for by those qualities the world is saved. Man is not entirely dependent upon known facts and needs. He is also a child of mystery and flame. He exists as much by continually finding himself out in innumerable revelations of whim and eccentricity as by the satisfaction of the primal needs. Nay, these are the primal needs, or rather the sum-total of all needs, the need for experiment. To those who are alive, every action, every thought, is in the nature of an experiment. Thought and deed go hand in hand, the twin instruments of those who recognise that a great deal more of life has yet to be revealed to man than the most visionary of men have yet imagined. We have, as yet, only touched the veriest hem of life's garment. It is a curious reflection upon our intelligence that such a view has not been generally accepted. But I fancy we are on the eve of a great awakening. We have allowed ourselves to be the slaves of custom and every other form of external despotism too long. Ibsen desired a revolution in the spirit of man; many others now desire it, and the cumulative effect of these desires is bound, in the long run, to bring about open revolt. The precise line that revolution will take is not easy to see. "Never prophesy unless you know," said Mark Twain; and how can one anticipate the eccentricities of a free people? But this is certain: the revolt will not be political, it will not be industrial, it will not be ethical. Such

revolutions are always with us. It will ignore just as heartily the dialectics of party politics as the statistics of industrial reformers and the barbed wire of the moralists. The revolution in the spirit of man will be brought about by fashion. Men and women one of these days will have the courage to be eccentric. They will do as they like—just as the great ones have always done. The word eccentric is a term of reproach and mild contempt and amusement to-day, because we live under a system which hates real originality. There never was a more uniform age than the present, in spite of our superficial variations. But such variations as we have to-day do not deceive those who look beneath the surface. In a society where everyone is alike, it is bad form to be eccentric; and eccentricity is bad form to-day. "Originality is dying away, and is being replaced by a spirit of servile and apish imitation." That was said more than fifty years ago, and there has been no marked change for the better.

Eccentricity demands an effort, an effort approaching genius. That is why ordinary people resent it; they are jealous of genius. They destroy it when they can, and what they cannot destroy they imitate and repeat to tediousness. For it should never be forgotten that every custom was once an eccentricity, and, in many cases, cases everyone will call to mind, the creators of the most adored conventions were served with contumely and sometimes death. One of these

days we may learn wisdom. But even then it will not be everybody who will become eccentric. The real eccentric is a pioneer, an initiator; he lives the experimental life, testing every thought, every desire, every emotion, in the crucible of experience. When we become wise we shall, of course, do as he does, and, instead of being jealous of him when we fail, we shall give him all the Freedom we have imagined for ourselves in our best, our most fearless moments. The societies of the future may even go a step further; they may establish about each individual a broad margin of Freedom for the expression of whim and fancy. A person's actions would not be judged by external standards, either moral or theological; they would receive no judgment at all save when they threatened to destroy the statutory margins of Freedom which gave everyone the right to life and the right to enjoy life. The lords of whim would thenceforth take their appointed places in life as leaders who did not rule, as instructors who did not teach. There is no realm at present where such margins for personal variety exist; but such realms I like to believe do already begin to take form in the womb of the future, and her maps will record them.



## DANDIES

A DANDY is an artist whose media are himself and his own personal appearance. The use of such materials has laid him open to the contempt of sedate and uniform ages, but his claims to existence are as justifiable as those of any other artist. There seems to be some irritability in those who dislike him because he shamelessly exploits himself in his art, but surely he shares the distinction with all artists. Every artist expresses himself in his art, so does the Dandy, but he admits it. Perhaps the opponents of dandyism feel, unconsciously, that a man is too insignificant and ephemeral a material for the purposes of art, and they may be right, but I very much doubt it. We are here only for a very brief while, to be sure, but is that any reason why we should not act our little parts during the small period we are upon the stage as splendidly as possible? It is the tragedy and not the fault of dandyism that it is brief, but the dandy shares the brevity of his art with the actor, the singer, the musical performer, the dancer, and the orator.

The art of the Dandy is the art of putting forward the best personal appearance, of expressing oneself in one's clothes, in one's manners, in one's talk; it is, in short, the faculty of being able to

become, in the phrase used by Mr. Arthur Symonds to describe Oscar Wilde, an artist in attitudes. Clothes are only the outer envelope of dandyism; the real Dandy begins within, his dandyism is the result of an attitude of mind, of a conviction that he is, as the poets have often hinted, a creature of infinite splendour with a desire to act accordingly. Dandyism, like town planning, is an eminently social art, and should be honoured and revered as such. Your true Dandy looks upon his personality as a movement in the pageant of life, to be planned and arranged as carefully as a city in Utopia. He is, indeed, Utopia become man: his is a man *in excelsis*, man glorified and peacocked into something as beautiful as a seashell, as light, as delicate, and as sufficient as a feather. Which all amounts to one thing, and that one thing is that the Dandy above all men is the one most proud of being man.

He must not, however, be confused with the mere creature of fashion; such poor fellows are not Dandies at all. The Dandy proper is beyond fashion: but in a fashionable throng he never looks out of place; that is because he is the individualist and not the anarchist of dress. Slaves of fashion are but parrots, they dress by rote. Women have been the greatest offenders, but who ever heard of a woman dandy? The very thought is ridiculous. Women are far too earnest, far too rational, to break the laws imposed by custom. I say "are," but should, remembering the militant feminism of to-day, say have been, for

women are changing; and, now I come to think of it, I have noticed a certain new and individual quality about the gowns of those women who form the vanguard of the revolt. Is this the beginning of female dandyism?

It has often happened that the fop has been mistaken for the Dandy. One should be careful of such pitfalls. Fops and Dandies are only superficially allied. The Dandy, as I have hinted, begins from within, his external splendour is the consummation of some inward glow, of that intense need of personal expression for the sake of expression, which impels other artists to recreate themselves in music, in painting, in poetry. He dreams only in terms of himself and those things which are most intimately associated with himself. The glory of the fop, if such it be, is extraneous, superimposed. It has been provoked from without, bought at a shop at the dictation of a salesman, it is bespoke dandyism, spurious and insufferable; and I imagine most people who denounce Dandies are really denouncing fops. Anyhow, I will be generous and think so.

At the same time I have a very promising suspicion that there is an honest objection to dandyism among the great majority of people. The Dandy, as you observe, is an individual, and the crowd has resented individuality ever since Dionysos last appeared — and before. Perhaps the crowd is right. I leave the question open. The individual may absorb too much of life and his persecution is a kind of supertax on the un-



earned increment of personality. Be it so or not, I shall not strive to reduce so elegant a theme to economics, only the fact noted above must be remembered in all considerations of the Dandy.

But such persecution as the individual has suffered in the past has, perhaps, not been entirely the expression of resentment against individuality as such. A great deal of it has, I feel sure, been due to the average man's traditional incapacity to weather variations in his surroundings and his habits. He gets into a groove, as we say, that is the prerogative of the average man, and so long as his grooves are inoffensive no one should gainsay him. The Dandy would never do so; he is not out to teach or even to correct—the simple and effective act of being is all in all to him. He requires his stage and audience, of course, but he asks not the flattery of imitation, but of admiration, and not always that; the quality of what is said affects him very little, enough for him that he is noticed.

Now the man in the groove does not like such an attitude towards life. Life is real, life is earnest, says he, therefore let us get about our business. And so we should, if we feel that way. But what if we don't? Ay, there's the rub! For if our souls promote us to attitudinise in rare and distinct apparel, to discourse elegantly of things that hardly matter, surrounded by all the paraphernalia of whim and fancy, who shall say we are not as much in earnest as those who are content to be serious about serious things?

So might the Dandy argue, and he would be right.

Such a life, it may be reasoned, is open to grave moral temptations, and the argument could be substantiated by many apt examples. The Dandies of the Restoration, for instance, had not the nicest of moral habits. Sedley, Dorset, Buckingham, John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester are shocking even as historical associates. Bath, in the great days of Beau Nash, was not above reproach, as we know. And both Brummell and D'Orsay would be seriously discounted by an ethical society.

But such lapses from the straight paths of moral rectitude are not, after all, the outcome of dandyism. The Dandy has too often been confused with the rake and the cad, and I must admit there have been good reasons for such confusion. But there are rakes and cads who are not Dandies, just as there are Dandies who are not rakes and cads.

Barbey D'Aurevilly, a Dandy himself, as well as a philosopher and historian of Dandies, has thrown the light of his own genius upon the question of dandyism and morals, and, speaking as he does from the inside, as one having authority, we must hear him. "Dandyism," he says, "while still respecting the conventionalities, plays with them. While admitting their power, it suffers from and revenges itself upon them, and pleads them as an excuse against themselves; dominates and is dominated by them in turn. To play this

twofold and changing game requires complete control of all the suppleness which goes to the making of elegance, in the same way as by their union all shades of the prism go to the making of the opal. This Brummell possessed. Heaven-born elegance was his, such as social trammels often spoil, and he was thus able to supply the capricious wants of a society bored and too severely bent under the strict laws of decorum. He proved that truth which matter-of-fact people always forgot, namely, if fancy's wings are clipped, they will grow half as long again. His was that charming familiarity which touches everything and profanes nothing."

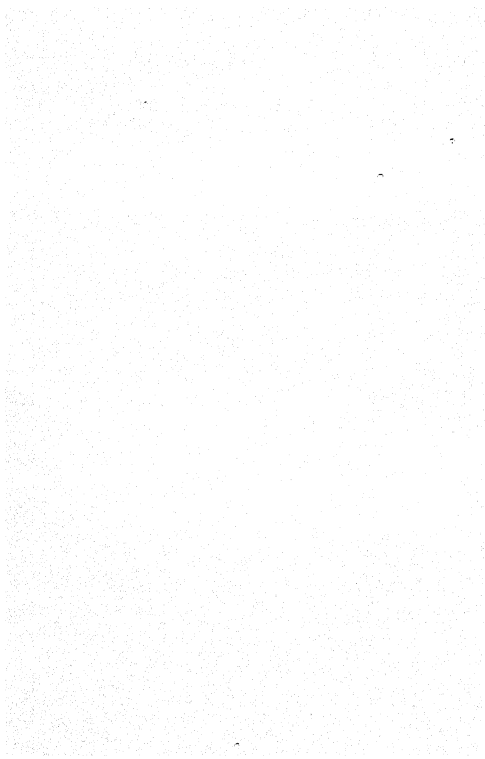
Let us not then rush into the error which supposes dandyism to be a vicious and an unnecessary thing. Dandyism is an expression of social life; it is social life, in fact, at white heat, the union of all the shades which go to the making of the opal. But although the Dandy of history is generally a person of means and elegance, even though his means have occasional and tiresome aberrations and estrangements, there is no real reason why the Dandy should have either means or be elegant in the luxurious sense. Elegant he will always be in the eternal sense, even though he be threadbare, for his dandyism is from within.

We have all known those tattered beaux on the fringe of comfortable life; real Dandies they, who contrive to be elegant on clothes a decade old, and who dine off a chop and porter with all the distinc-

## Dandies

tion of a Brummell at the table of Alvanley's fat friend, the royal Dandy, George IV. Such Dandies, although unwritten and unsung, are in the great tradition, eternal devotees of the art of attitude and personality.

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## OF THE SELF-SUFFICIENT

It is never quite healthy to dwell overmuch upon the ailments of the human machine. They like it too much, and ailments are as public men, they grow by being noticed. At the same time I am not so short-sighted as to be unable to see that heart-to-heart talks about the behaviour of our bodies are not, in their own way, very enthralling for those who are adepts at the business. For myself such subjects have small charm; perhaps I lack the skill that might endow them with the necessary wonder and delight. But there is one ailment which I should like to discuss in a manner befitting its importance. It is an ailment by no means obscure, and so prevalent as to be free of all tiresome suspicions of being unique; it is familiar, entertaining, and irritating; none of us are immune from attack, but, unlike most ailments, one may suffer from its depredations for many years, and often for ever, without being aware of the fact. But with your fellows it is otherwise; they know when you are affected. However sly, however insidious, however furtive it may be in yourself, it is patent and even noisome to others. This ailment is known popularly as swelled head. Now swelled head is a complaint that afflicts people of all sorts and sizes, and of all capacities; and it is by no means, as circum-

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stances might lead one to imagine, a peculiarity of our own age. I meet all sorts of people with it, from the greatest to the most insignificant, and I do not know in which it is the more offensive. Perhaps in the former, for there is nothing more objectionable in this world than the great man who knows that he is great; than the able man who is over-conscious and over-proud of his ability. When a commonplace person, one possessed neither of abundant genius nor of great ability, suffers from swelled head, we ought not to be offended, we ought to be amused. To be offended is to join issue with the offenders; it is as though you were fearful that they might, as it were, jump your claim.

So far as my memory goes, most great men have been afflicted with the complaint. There are exceptions, Julius Cæsar for instance, who have escaped, but they are a hopeless minority. Napoleon had it, and it wrought his ruin; Balzac had it, and Charles Dickens. It is a part of the stock-in-trade of most of our poets and painters, and strikingly obvious among our actors. Great soldiers run the poets and painters very closely. But in modern times swelled head has been given a whimsical term of acceptance by many eminent literary men. This has given it something of a new standing in the world of to-day; it has raised a despised ailment to the dignity of an art. One ought not to be surprised at that, for it is not the first time in history that a disease has become an art. The new art began in this

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country with Oscar Wilde, and the innumerable *poseurs* who have followed boldly or mincingly in his steps. Mr. Bernard Shaw is a past-master in the art; but you never can tell when he has his tongue in his cheek and when not. A great deal of his personal arrogance is doubtless assumed for the purpose of publicity; but it is also true that Mr. Bernard Shaw is not in the habit of trifling with his own high opinion of himself. He is intensely proud of and untiringly interested in G.B.S. When he couples himself with Shakespeare he means it. This attitude towards the public and history exasperates many people, but for myself I am by no means annoyed. The men who have made swelled head an art give me great delight, it is such a change from the mock-humility of their predecessors. Not only from the mock-humility of their predecessors, but from the mock-humility of so many public men of the moment. Much of the self-restraint and personal modesty of the literature of to-day is but the cloak of an arrogance which, in the writers themselves, is little short of morbid. The writings of such people, therefore, lack the wholesomeness of frankly admitted pride, as well as the humour of that other form of pride which is now an art. They are like peacocks who have not the courage to admit the beauty of their own tails. And the matter is aggravated by the fact that this lack of courage, this cowardice, for such it is, curdles their natures with resentment and all uncharitableness, unless they have succeeded in wheedling



## Of the Self-Sufficient

others to do their trumpeting for them, which many of them have done with striking success. There are, of course, genuinely modest writers, who express themselves with a modesty which is a part of their nature, leaving the results for the world to discover, and waiting that far-off divine event with dignity and patience. But they are so few as to be negligible.

Every man who is thoroughly alive to the day is alive first of all to his own importance. He possesses to some extent what is called swelled head. He need not be offensive; that depends upon the quality of his personality. A likeable man is not made the less likeable because of the assertiveness of his conceit. We do not object to the pride of a peacock, neither do we admire the lowliness of a cur. But swelled head needs no apologists—has it not had its philosophers? During the last three-quarters of a century there has been a constant propaganda of arrogance, which has not ceased even to-day. Stirner, Nietzsche, Emerson, Thoreau, Wilde, Shaw—a far-flung line handing on the torch of egoism which was carried also by Heraclitus, Marcus Antoninus, and Montaigne. The only difference to-day is that the young men and the maidens are reading. The old wine goeth into new bottles. “I am owner of my might, and I am so when I know myself as unique.” So purred Stirner to his soul. But as he visualised nothing in the spread of his world, “his creative nothing,” modern swelled heads may be shy of him. Not

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so, however, with Nietzsche, whose philosophic arrogance has led many simple souls into the belief that there are short cuts to personal power. "To learn how to love oneself is the finest, cunningest, and most patient of arts." Many think it is also easy; but Zarathustra smiles at this innocence. Perhaps, after all, neither Stirner nor Nietzsche is meat for swelled head in its popular form; the proper food is Emerson. Surely no other writer has caused so much self-approval as he. One cannot recall one's first reading of that wonderful essay on "Self Reliance" without a thrill. It is the recalling of an exalted moment, an experience—like one's first swim, one's first love, one's first sight of London, one's first appearance in print! The magical sentences, commands, and aphorisms, bit deep into the soul like acid into the etcher's plate, and years afterwards they come back fragrant of youth, and hope, and courage. "To believe your own thought, to believe that what is true for you in your private heart is true for all men—that is genius." "A man must carry himself in the presence of all opposition, as if everything were titular and ephemeral but he." "Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind." "A great man is coming to eat at my house. I do not wish to please him, I wish that he should wish to please me." "Insist on yourself; never imitate." And above all, that generous solatium, that unique nest of aspiration and conceit, "To be great is to be misunderstood." What ardent thanks have

## Of the Self-Sufficient

gone forth to Emerson for those words! And what a number of years it takes us to unlearn what we thought they meant.

But in spite of all this justification by philosophy, swelled head is not among the admitted ailments—not even among those who read Emerson and the rest. They, these artistic and intellectual folk, are too modest; they feel guilty about their pride. In business it is otherwise. Business is simpler than art, and swelled head has its recognised place therein. I believe it has a definite economic value. Anyhow, a great many people with the complaint seem to hold the reins of commerce. Indeed, I will go so far as to say that the man who lacks a swelled head had better keep out of Cheapside or Throgmorton Street, unless he is content with a maximum salary of, say, forty shillings per week. Still, not every wearer of a swelled head attains to commercial eminence. There are failures. But the business man possessing every business virtue, and lacking swelled head, is in danger of being crowded out. Yes, swelled head has entirely ceased to be a disease in commerce, it has become craft, what might be described as the craft of window-dressing: skill in so displaying your personal goods and achievements that others may see them, and approve in the same way as you yourself approve. It is the faculty of letting your light so shine that men may see your good works and glorify you—at so much per cent. A great deal depends, of course, upon your having

## Of the Self-Sufficient

the goods to display, and even then the practitioner of the craft risks many dangers. To carry a swelled head is, in a sense, to court destruction. But, on the other hand, if you do not court destruction you will never achieve anything. Achievement is born of risk; if you throw your cap in the air for very joy there is a danger that you may not catch it, and that it will get damaged; but that does not mean that it is not worth the risk. All those who achieve anything worth achieving, and I do not say that commercial success is one of those things, have done so by always being prepared to burn their ships. That, you may say, has no apparent connection with swelled head, but if you do say it you are wrong. If by wearing a swelled head you risk the wrath of those who think they have no use for such an article, or of those whose reason is controlled by their modesty, you are certainly taking risks. For even granting that swelled head in any form is offensive, it is never half so offensive as the habit of toadying for the sake of prestige or emolument.

All of this may be a matter of taste. And the prevalence of swelled head in the modern world may mean that the majority of people either like it for its own sake, or like to be taken in by it. I stand with neither. Swelled head never deceives me, but on the other hand it never offends me; still, I do not think I will go so far as to say I like it. It amuses me. And is it not right to be amused at the peccadilloes of men? With swelled head it is even necessary, else you are in danger of

## Of the Self-Sufficient

infection. By your wrath you convict yourself of the complaint and become a joke for the wise. But whichever way we look at it, let us not fall into the error of imagining that it is only the little people, the insignificant people, the people incapable of achievement, who suffer from swelled head. If we do, we shall be very wrong, because we shall be achieving neither its cure nor its accomplishment; nor shall we see the thing as it is, and so attain laughter. Let us be quite frank, even if it come to admitting that our own darlings of history, nay, even our own favourite novelists or favourite actors, wore swelled heads during all their waking hours. But if we want to be very nasty, if we want to give vent to our indignation and empty our spleen upon the proud wearers of that article, we may always remember that swelled head thrives best of all in a lunatic asylum.

## XIX

# SUPERMAN

THE world has always dreamt of the coming of a saviour, of some personified power which should save it from what at the particular time and place was considered to be evil—from pain and sin and death. Generally the dream has taken superhuman form; the saviour of man must take the form of man, but remain at the same time something more than man: a god, in short. In our own day a change has been coming over the vision of men. The desire for a saviour has not been abandoned; on the contrary, the need for such a being has become more pressing than ever. Europe cries aloud in each of its restless parts—in Russia, in Germany, in France, in England—for a man who will ride the whirlwind and direct the storm of modern unrest. But the cry is for a man, not a god.

It must be noted, however, that this cry for a man, leader of men, is only the popular cry; anything might satisfy it. But there are small sections of people in many civilised countries to-day who have long since abandoned their hope in mere man, just as they have abandoned faith in the superhuman, as that word used to be understood. These people look further ahead, without losing touch with actuality, to a new ideal called Superman. We have all heard the word. Has

# Superman

it not stalked across the popular stage? Even the daily papers have mentioned it, whilst for those who take the trouble to read about things for themselves there is a library of books expounding and confounding, upholding and denouncing, the idea in many languages and many accents.

In these books may be found the keynote of a dream which is as yet in its infancy, but it carries with it the idea-stuff which may ultimately dominate the imagination of the world. It was broached first in the modern world by Friedrich Nietzsche. This German philologist, struggling with the values of words, stumbled upon the need of revaluing ideas as well, and the outcome was an informal philosophy demanding what he called "the transvaluation of all values," or, in other words, a general stocktaking and discounting of the stock-in-trade of the human mind and its conceptions of life and action. In propounding the doctrine of new values, Nietzsche gradually realised that man would be unequal to the task; indeed, he saw quite clearly that the cowardice, the hypocrisy, and the morality he had to fight were essentially human; the chief weakness of the human being was being human, what he called "human-all-too-human," and the only lasting way out of the dilemma was the production of a new type of being which would be free of this weakness. That new type he named Superman.

The idea of a Superman is, however, not entirely new. It has probably existed at the back of every human longing for a leader, a saviour,

# Superman

or a messiah, since the world began; even the word "Superman" is not new. Many German writers have hinted at the idea, and, doubtless, also, Emerson and Thoreau had glimmerings of it, or some similar idea, as William Blake most certainly had; whilst we have always been familiar with the word "Superhuman," and writers like Walt Whitman and Thomas Carlyle have voiced the cause of the "superb person" and the "hero" each in his own way. But Whitman came nearer Nietzsche than Carlyle did, for he did not imagine his superb person lord and master of a race of inferior persons who worshipped and followed him, as Carlyle imagined his hero, but as one of a race of similar superb persons, each equally strong and dignified, much as Nietzsche imagined his Superman. There is, however, this fundamental difference between Whitman and Nietzsche; it exists also between all the other Supermanians and the greatest modern interpreter of the idea: with them Superman is merely a great man, a superb person, a hero; with Nietzsche he is to be a new species:

*"I teach you the Superman. Man is something that is to be surpassed. What have ye done to surpass man?"*

*"All beings hitherto have created something beyond themselves; and ye want to be the ebb of that great tide, and would rather go back to the beast than surpass man?"*

*"What is the ape to man? A laughing-stock, a*



*thing of shame. And just the same shall man be to the Superman : a laughing-stock, a thing of shame.*

*" Ye have made your way from worm to man, and much within you is still worm ; and once were ye apes, and even yet man is more of an ape than any of the apes.*

*" Even the wisest among you is only a disharmony and hybrid of plant and phantom. But do I bid you become phantoms or plants ?*

*" Lo, I teach you the Superman ! "*

These are the parent-words of the modern idea of Superman. It is from them that all the great discussions have come, but no interpreters of Nietzsche have as yet fully realised their true import ; all of them argue as if they imagined Superman to be an improved sort of man, a revised aristocrat, a hero, an empire-builder, some resplendent combination of Napoleon, Goethe, and Mr. Pierpont-Morgan.

But upholders of the idea have not as yet given us any positive conception of Superman's appearance and character ; their pictures are all negatives. Mr. G. K. Chesterton is the only writer who has deliberately attempted to draw the portrait of a Superman, but he took trouble to make us realise that his idea of the new type was an imbecile. Mr. H. G. Wells also rejects the idea ; the Superman for him is nothing but a " blonde-beast " ; a sort of German bogey-man. But in his forecast of the future of society, " A Modern Utopia," he has pictured a world under the

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administration of an order of Samurai, who very much resemble the popular intellectual conception of what Superman might be. Still these Samurai of H. G. Wells are as far removed from the Nietzschean ideal as are such great men as Shakespeare, Goethe, Shelley, whom, along with Cromwell, Napoleon, and Cæsar, Mr. Bernard Shaw considers "our few accidental Supermen." Obviously Bernard Shaw has not got much further than Thomas Carlyle, who placed men of this type in the category of heroes, beside Mahomet, Luther, and Knox, in the famous series of lectures which he based on the half-truth that "the history of what man has accomplished in this world is at bottom the history of the great men who have worked here."

All the heroes and great men about whom we know anything that is at all reliable have only a partial resemblance to Nietzsche's idea of the Superman. Julius Cæsar, Cromwell, Napoleon, Socrates, Goethe, John Knox, Luther, Shakespeare, Shelley—looked at through Nietzsche's eyes—are human-all-too-human, and the more human because of their greatness. Somewhat nearer to the idea, but still far removed from it, are the great mythical or semi-mythical figures of religion and romance: Moses and Mahomet, Odin and Cuchulain, Apollo and Dionysos, Siegfried, King Arthur, and Robin Hood. But after we have said our best of them, we can no more acclaim them Supermen in the Nietzschean sense than we can acclaim as Supermen such self-

# Superman

He sees man as a dull and muddy stream, and Superman as a great and swelling sea which will absorb the muddy stream without becoming unclean. It is true that he distinguishes between man and man, but his distinctions are not the old distinctions between the great man and the ordinary man. The thing that he denounces most in mankind is what he calls the "herding instinct." The really great man, the man who is heading straight for the clean seas of Superman, is the one who is neither dependent upon the herd nor upon its morality. Men cluster together because they are weak and afraid, and by this herding they become weaker, not stronger. Instead of breaking fresh ground in the evolution of life, they are eternally conserving the old positions and adapting themselves to the old surroundings. The great man makes his environment adapt itself to him; only the slave becomes amenable to his environment.

The Superman will be evolved out of this powerful type of man, out of the type which creates new values in life, and not out of the prevalent type which accepts life at the valuation of others. Morality, as we understand it, will have no meaning for this progressive type of man; he will be what Nietzsche calls "beyond good and evil"; he will not consider what is good or evil in the abstract—far less what other people call good and evil; the only test of such moral ideas will be himself. What is good for him will be good, what is bad, bad. This does not mean that

# Superman

he will be "selfish" in the ordinary acceptation of the term; indeed, his attitude may easily produce a generosity and dignified unselfishness such as the world has not known before.

The forces we call instinct, desire, volition, will, are to be the *motifs* of action in such a type. But the action of the Superman will not be towards life; Nietzsche substitutes what he has termed "the will to power" for Schopenhauer's "will to live." Power is the watchword, then, and the being who is prepared to sacrifice everything to power, not power in the abstract, but power for some purpose believed by him to be great, is aiding the evolution of life towards Superman. The pathway of such beings must needs be lonely and painful, but the superhuman "will to power" thrives on such things. Ever since the dawn of the human era, pain has been shunned as evil, but those who move towards Superman will welcome pain as the stone upon which they whet the blade of power. Those who are about to become Supermen will welcome loneliness also; they will see through the "pathos of distance" the temple of their own genius. They will be the great despisers, criticising, rejecting, scorning the human-all-too-human, with its eternal readiness to yield to circumstances and environment, going on their way to the music of their own laughter born of the conqueror's joy. But though they will despise and reject what is not akin to their attitude towards life, they will not be negative in attitude; the essence of the new progress is

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positive. Those who march towards Superman will be the eternal "yea sayers," the masters of their own whims and desires.

Already there are many who look forward to the coming of this "world-approving, exuberant, vivacious," but eternally tragic, figure, as people of old time awaited the coming of a new god. Nietzsche wrecked his mighty brain in beating out this idea for man, and no greater insult could be dealt his idea than to associate the Superman with the little strong men who astound the world to-day with feats that appear great because of the general absence of greatness. Few of the so-called strong men of to-day are strong in the Nietzschean sense; these Malvolios of commerce are superweeds, not supermen: their greatness has been thrust upon them. The power of the Superman will be independent of circumstances, it will not be given. It will control because it must, and because it can. The Superman will convince by his presence.

One of the chief differences between Superman and man may well be that Superman will be an all-round being; he will not run to seed in specialism. Men are generally one thing or nothing—lawyers, drapers, doctors, clerks, grocers, poets, engineers, painters, journalists, navvies, sailors, or what not—and each thinks and acts only in the circle of his own special province. We have even invented a proverb, "Jack of all trades, master of none," to discourage those who would take the Superhuman path and become

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masters of all trades and Jacks of none, for that is what Superman will be. The really great men of all ages have always been men of varied capacity. Your mere specialist was never a great man, Leonardo da Vinci was a master in painting, sculpture, architecture, engineering, and a philosopher to boot. Michael Angelo was both poet and scholar, painter, sculptor, architect, and military engineer; Napoleon was even greater as administrator than soldier; Dante was a poet and a statesman. Such men, it may be assumed, have at least one of the attributes of the Superman.

It is certain that capacity and power will be united in the new race of Master-beings, but these will not be the only, nor perhaps the more important, qualities. There is another quality without which they are as nought. Nietzsche has associated this quality with the name of Dionysos. To the capacity and power of the great men must be added Dionysian ecstasy, that joy in life, that spirit of playfulness, that frenzy, abandonment, recklessness, or what you will, which swings a being along the creative path regardless of all consequences, reckless of all danger. Superman will welcome peril as man welcomes safety; he will be the child of a race that has braved the fiery furnace so many times that eventually it is able to walk through the flames unscathed. Superman will be the reincarnation of the spirit of Dionysos—but he dare not come as one unique and astounding person—man would resent that,

as he has always resented and killed those who are greater than himself. Superman must come as a new species—as to-day he is a part of a new romance, which perhaps, after all, is the old romance—that romance which Emerson believed the world existed to realise, the romance which meant “the transformation of genius into practical power,” which promised always a new joy and demanded a new health.

“We new, nameless, and unfathomable creatures,” he says, “we firstlings of a future still unproved—we, who have a new end in view, also require new means to that end—that is to say, a new healthiness, a stronger, keener, tougher, bolder and merrier healthiness than any that has existed heretofore. He who longs to feel in his own soul the whole range of values and aims that have prevailed on earth until this day, and to sail round all the coasts of this ideal ‘Mediterranean Sea’; who, from the adventures of his own inmost experience, would fain know how it feels to be a conqueror and a discoverer of the ideal;—as also how it is with the artist, the saint, the legislator, the sage, the scholar, the man of piety, and the godlike anchorite of yore;—such a man requires one thing above all for his purpose, and that is, *great healthiness*—such healthiness as he not only possesses, but also constantly acquires, and must acquire, because he is continually sacrificing it again, and is compelled to sacrifice it! And now, therefore, after having been long on the way, we Argonauts of the idea,

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whose pluck is greater than prudence would allow, and who are often shipwrecked and bruised, but, as I have said, healthier than people would like to admit, dangerously healthy, and for ever recovering our health—it would seem as if we had before us, as a reward for all our toils, a country still undiscovered, the horizon of which no one has yet seen, a beyond to every country and every refuge of the ideal that man has ever known, a world so overflowing with beauty, strangeness, doubt, terror, and divinity, that both our curiosity and our lust of possession are frantic with eagerness. Alas! how in the face of such vistas, and with such burning desire in our conscience and consciousness, could we still be content with *the man of the present day*? This is bad indeed; but, that we should regard his worthiest aims and hopes with ill-concealed amusement, or perhaps give them no thought at all, is inevitable. Another ideal now leads us on, a wonderful seductive ideal, full of danger, the pursuit of which we should be loath to urge upon anyone, because we are not so ready to acknowledge anyone's *right to it*: the ideal of a spirit who plays ingenuously (that is to say, involuntarily, and as the outcome of superabundant energy and power) with everything that, hitherto, has been called holy, good, inviolable, and divine; to whom even the loftiest thing that the people have with reason made their measure of value would be no better than a danger, a decay, and an abasement, or at least a relaxation and temporary forgetfulness of self: the ideal of



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a humanly superhuman well-being and goodwill, which often enough will seem inhuman—as when, for instance, it stands beside all past earnestness on earth, and all past solemnities in hearing, speech, tone, look, morality, and duty, as their most lifelike and unconscious parody—but with which, nevertheless, *great earnestness* perhaps alone begins, the first note of interrogation is affixed, the fate of the soul changes, the hour-hand moves, and tragedy begins.” With such austerity, then, does Friedrich Nietzsche conceive his idea of Superman. But even he, with his large gift of vision, that same vision which Swift, years before, called the art of seeing things invisible, has been able to do little more than hint at a tendency rather than embody an idea. Superman is as yet a name: an exuberant and tragic ghost pervading the twilight of humanity.

## XX

# IMMORTAL RUSSIA'

(1908)

### I

I WAS sitting in a little café in a little street just off the Rue Sainte Honoré; one of those streets which are familiar in the centre of Paris, more like a chasm than a street; one of those cafés common to every town in France, a little narrow place with little tables and white cloths, awaiting diners, and a row of smaller round tables and iron chairs between two wooden partitions abutting on to the pavement of the street. I sat at one of these.

My eyes had wandered up the tall stucco front of the opposite house. It had a double door with upper panels of fretted ironwork, behind which was glass, and the rows of tall windows had shutters painted a dull red. One of the shutters was unhinged, and swung to and fro—I wondered idly why no one fastened it. The house was painted grey—Parisian grey, the grey that looks as if it had once been white, which it probably had been; the grey that turns to purple and blue with the changing light. I again wondered why. I wondered why it did not turn green and pink and saffron—and saw no reason why it should not do so, or even chequer and line and foliate—why not?

No, it was not absinthe. It was *bock*, *le bon bock*—a pointed flagon and a golden liquid—and, as yet, I had not touched it. It was simply idleness. I had nothing else to do, and I was the only customer. Presently, however, two young men sauntered in and occupied chairs in the corner on my right. They were dressed in the sober black of the "gay" city, with black soft hats, dilapidated of brim, and flowing black ties hanging over their coats. One was clean-shaven, the other the same, save for a line of black hair on the upper lip, like a strayed eyebrow. In a little while they were joined by a third, a tall, heavy-featured young man, also all black, except for his hair and beard, which were flaming red; the first cropped short, the last wild and bushy. He was clearly a Russian; if his beard had been black, he would have been the Russian of fiction. The others were Russians also, but, after the manner of Russians in Paris, they looked like Frenchmen, and spoke the language of France. They talked very quietly but earnestly. I could only catch a word or so. The youth with the moustache seemed dejected. "What's the use?" he kept on asking. The red Russian was reasonable, rational, argumentative; whilst the clean-shaven man showed something like passion; he seemed to burn with a fierce enthusiasm which now looked like hate and now like the sort of love you give to a child. I only caught one burning phrase from his lips: "Russia is immortal!" It was uttered with the irrational finality of conviction.

# Immortal Russia

And just as I had thought idly about the swinging shutter and the iridescent greyness of the house opposite, I thought, or rather felt, about Russia.

## II

I saw that great country in a fresh light. Her wracked and tortured body no longer represented a shuddering people awaiting the coming of a leader. It was the expression of the long agony of the pathway to Freedom. Russia has no supreme pathway to Freedom. Russia, I thought, has no supreme man because she is a supreme nation—what has individual supremacy to do with her great courage, her eternal revolt, her savage determination and patience? One of these days we shall know that these qualities have made the Russians the master-people of civilisation. If the Revolution fail, Russia will still be supreme. She will be supreme in spite even of victory, as she is supreme in spite of defeat, because she can abandon herself with eternal hope and without regret. Russia has the spirit to take great risks and to make great sacrifices. She has courage: courage in power and weakness, in virtue and vice, in ignorance, in knowledge, in imagination; she thrives on destruction, like an admiral who survives by burning his ships.

The very weakness of Russia is a kind of strength. The Governors are strong in their mortality before the bullet and the bomb; the people are strong in their tortured bodies and in the long

# Immortal Russia

silences of Siberia. The personality of Russia is a flaming sword—its metal has been fired by revolt and tempered by snow—it shines like a beacon over the world. It shines in a noble and passionate art, which Russians do not only make for themselves, if they make it at all for themselves, which I sometimes doubt. Perhaps they do not want art because they are too busy living and dying. Art is civilised and tame; art is for Paris, for London, for Vienna, not for Warsaw and Moscow and Odessa. Russia thrives on sacrifice, not art. She conquers the invader by burning down Moscow and the Revolution by precipitating it.

There is, however, an art she keeps for herself. It is the great ironic art—the art of tragedy. Tragedy is her normal state. No other nation as a nation can love and hate like Russia. No other nation could bear such sufferings with dry eyes and with laughter. Her life to the outer world looks like an infinite succession of deaths—yet of no people does the world expect so much. Russia is the prophet out of the Galilee of civilisation—her cross lies heavy on her, but she does not cry out that she is forsaken of God—she laughs.

The throne of Russia is fenced about by lies, glorified by priests, and defended by rifles, whips, and swords. The Czar withholds from his people a freedom he has given to the Cossacks in exchange for their services as the instruments of his tyranny. The peasants, after having been freed from one form of slavery and thrown into

another, are shot down because they cry out in their bondage of want, and their little starving communes are destroyed. And so it is always; what one hand of the Little Father gives the other takes away. Yet he cannot kill his people any more than they can kill him or his system. But, after all, he is not killing them, he is creating them. The Russian people is not yet born; the pains of Russia are the pains of labour. Russia is a woman in agony.

Again, paradox that she is, she is more than this. She is not wholly woman, although the central figures of her drama are women, Sophie Perovskaya and Marie Spiridinova: she is almost a god. She kills and laughs. Assassination with her is virtue. She rushes into the fiery furnace, certain that one day she will come out unscathed, as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego did. Individually her people are like satyrs; in the mass, Dionysos—that is why they sacrifice themselves with joy.

Death stalks through her cities. It dogs the footsteps of student and peasant and workman, and of the Cossacks marching bomb-file through the streets of Warsaw—yet the cafés are crowded, and hilarious shouting and the clatter of glasses almost drown the orchestra screaming madly *La Matchiche* or dreaming voluptuously *Quand l'Amour Meurt*; and over the smouldering chaos of Baku, over the pain and death of the desolate city, floats like a challenge the ribald song of a *chanteuse*.

## III

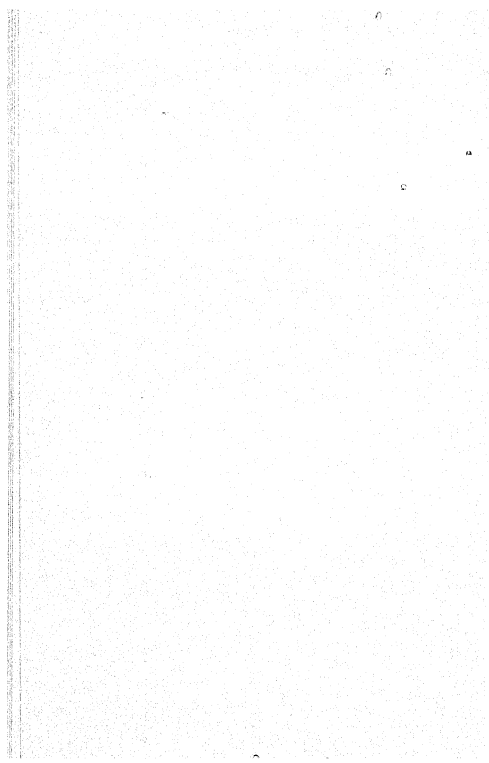
Thus I saw Russia, in a swift series of ideas and pictures, as one sees life from the window of a railway train whilst discussing the changing view with a friend, and then my eyes drifted again towards the swinging shutter of the house opposite; no one came to fasten it; but I no longer wondered why, I took it for granted as one takes life for granted, as the world takes Russia for granted. The little tables began to attract people; they sat in twos and threes chatting, smoking, drinking. A plump woman sat next to a plump man; she ate olives dreamily out of a white paper in her hand, between appreciative draughts of bock. The man read *L'Aurore*, every now and then reading a passage aloud for her ears. An elderly gentleman drank black coffee out of a tumbler, and looked into space through clouds of cigarette smoke. A dejected person with lank hair dropped water out of a bowl on to an oblong piece of sugar held in a spoon over a glass containing absinthe, his eyes following the delicate green clouding of his liquor with enthusiasm. "*Le Matin*?" queried a news vendor at my elbow. "No, thanks," I said forgetfully in English. His face lit up intelligently, and he offered me first the *Daily Mail*, then some mildly indecent picture postcards. He recognised my nationality.

The three men were still drinking and talking,

## Immortal Russia

talking, talking—every word a dream of Russia—every thought a pain. Russia is immortal, I reflected, as I turned down an empty glass. “*Vive la Russie*” were the parting words I heard as the three were joined by another, and I walked away into the laughter of Paris.





## HUNGER-TAMENESS

It was one of those familiar spring days which belie the calendar. There was a wind, a keen and penetrating wind; a wind that discovered your weaker spots with wonderful precision. It caught up little patches of dust in the roadways, whirled them round until they looked like ghostly Der-vishes, and then scattered them into oblivion. It was a merry wind, but its humour was vindictive. It stung my face as I stood indecisively in a diminutive maze of crossing streets between the Law Courts and Kingsway; and it seemed to be enjoying itself so heartily as it scampered along a little lane, after an invigorating romp over the vacant spaces of the Strand "improvement," that I marvelled at its spite.

As I stood for a moment taking my bearings, which the most habitual Londoner is forced to do every now and then in his wilderness of streets, I became conscious of a certain raggedness about me. It was not in the actual locality, that bore marked evidences of rebuilding and was still neat and clean; neither was it in the atmosphere, for such a wind had no mercy on stray wisps and remnants of fog, even had they shown any desire to hang themselves about at the time, which they certainly had not. I eventually realised that it

## Hunger-Tameness

was in the people; not the rapid passer-by, but the loiterers who are to be found in every street, and who may be said to be the street's inhabitants as distinct from the inhabitants of the houses. They were not ordinary loiterers, however, men lapped in a sort of Nirvana of idleness, but loiterers with a purpose. At every corner they stood; eager little groups of dejected men of all ages, but mostly middle-aged to old, or that indefinite age which is a characteristic of so many poor adults, and they seemed to be watching, hungrily, I imagined, a stout constable who paced serenely up and down the middle of the broadest of the adjoining streets, sometimes stopping and looking about him with blank severity.

I had hardly time to reflect on this curious and scattered dejectedness, which struck me suddenly in the manner of a dream, when something happened; it was something very simple—the policeman raised a hand aloft; but the effect was like the releasing of a spring which sets an intricate machine in motion. The ragged men seemed to be awaiting this signal, for they were suddenly thrown into activity. In a moment every avenue in the vicinity shot forth a stream of abject humanity—greasy, ragged, careworn, dilapidated human beings, who shuffled—I could not call it running—towards a spot near the constable. Their very eagerness was unclean, their presence unseemly. Yet in some strange way I felt linked with them and their destiny; not in brotherhood, but in kind. I was of their species and I felt

## Hunger-Tameness

ashamed, ashamed of them, ashamed for them, and ashamed of myself.

The constable stood in the roadway, a plump, haughty figure. The tatterdemalions darted past him, from all directions, colliding against one another in the gutter before the door of a religious mission. A silent, half-hearted little struggle followed; the cluster of shuffling beings looked like a writhing heap of rags, like offal disturbed by decomposition. The policeman eyed it critically; and a few passers-by stopped before going on their way. Soon the human tangle unravelled itself into a queue of fifty or sixty men, in the gutter.

"Why do they wait?" I said, approaching the portly officer.

"For soup," he replied simply, sardonically.

"When do they get it?" I asked.

"At half-past four."

It was just three o'clock.

"Have they been waiting long?" I inquired.

"All day."

This is heroic, I thought, and I walked over to look at the thin grey line. What a crew! There was not a decent garment among them, not a clean body. The line was but an anxious empty stomach covered with rags and filth. It emitted a foetid odour like a midden. Unclean, unkempt, unfed, it stood and shivered—almost unrecognisable as human.

The individuality of the separate members of the ragged queue, such as it was, was, as usual in

## Hunger-Tameness

crowds, merged in the individuality of the mass. There were different features and certain ludicrous distinctions among the rags which covered their limp bodies. There were shades of pallor and greyness in the faces; degrees in the sunkenness of cheeks; grades in beards, from grisly stubble to flowing yellowy white; some high cheek-bones shone blue with cold; there were red noses, sore eyes, and festering necks.

Among the garments were frock coats, and tweed lounge coats; some had great rents, others were patched carelessly; one buttonless frock coat was threaded up the front with string; through a broken seam in the back I could see the man's pallid flesh: he wore no under-garments. Trousers hung baggy, limp, and frayed; and boots were manifold in abject characteristics—all were burst, none had heels; one creature wore tennis shoes tied about the instep with strips of dirty calico, another wore the sorriest patent leathers I had ever seen. Their hats were grotesque in their battered and greasy variety.

These details had to be sought out; to the casual glance they did not exist. The queue was a thing in itself, a silent, patient thing; a tabid line of men; a wrecked, wasted line of superfluous humanity; an evil-smelling scrap-heap gradually decomposing. It sidled and snivelled; sometimes it laughed hoarsely and sometimes it swore; it spat and grunted and swayed slightly, shuffling from one foot to the other; here and there it smoked, in foul little pipes, discarded bits of

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tobacco and cigar ends, picked up in the gutter. It was long-suffering, but tame; it was dirty and hungry, but patient.

My shame deepened as I reviewed the sorry line., I felt as though in the presence of deformed nakedness. I had an impulse to take the thing into an eating-house and gorge it with food. I smiled as I thought of the consternation of the manager of the Holborn Restaurant if we marched into his sumptuous halls. I walked away some paces and then stood looking back at it. I was spell-bound. It overpowered me. I wanted to talk to someone about it, but everybody was in a hurry, none seemed to care, and few to notice. I was not so much impressed by its squalor as by its tameness—the slow decay, the evil-smelling tameness of the thing, obsessed me.

I thought of certain animals and how hunger makes them fierce and brave. I saw a hungry tigress with her cubs. I saw her spring upon another animal, rending and devouring it, and the little ones dabbled appreciatively in the blood, before snuggling into their dam's replenished breasts. Hungry savages peopled my brain, but none stood in queues awaiting soup. They were fierce, they did not wait for food to be given them, they took it. Sometimes there was no food and nothing to kill; then they lay down and died; but whilst there was the least chance of food they took it, even if in the taking of it they were killed. That struck me as splendid. But these men starved patiently. There was food all about them

## Hunger-Tameness

—in the warehouses, in the shop windows, in the eating-houses; they knew it was there, they could see it, smell it, but not eat it—and they became tame, not fierce like the animals.

I felt that Nature had produced in them something new; she had produced patience with hunger, she had made it possible for beings to fester and decompose without resistance, to be acquiescent in a living death. She had created something lower than the brutes.

I took another look at the ragged thing, and left it standing there, watched by the portly constable, awaiting the coming of charity.

## XXII

### TORPOR

IN a little cluster of mean streets packed in between the lower end of Shaftesbury Avenue and New Oxford Street, amid a welter of coster stalls loaded with vegetables and fish, reeking eating-houses with bubbling pans of sausage in their windows, and tenth-rate dram-shops, stands the Church of St. Giles, Bloomsbury. Its columned Renaissance spire, weathered to that rich, shadowy greyness which makes the stones of old London a joy for ever, rises aloft majestically like a piece of wrought silver. The grey beauty of its eaves mingles pleasantly with the green foliage in the little churchyard, which reposes like an oasis in a desert of brick and asphalt.

Across this desert wayfarers are continually passing and repassing—hungry folk and weary, who seem doomed to wander up and down the town like bewildered ghosts. To-day there are more than usual, and as I walk through the oasis of the churchyard of St. Giles I notice the seats are all occupied. But still more weary ones come with starved looks, seeking rest, only to pass on hopelessly with shuffling gait to the bigger oases of the Thames Embankment or the great parks, where they can rest within the shadow of royal palaces and the gathering-places of the Olympians.

There is a quietness in St. Giles' churchyard,



## Torpor

a religious peace, lulled gently by the eternal song of London, that grinding orchestration of its immense traffic, reduced here to a piping melody that can scarcely hold its own with the cheerful and incessant bickering of the sparrows. • The poor have yielded to the calming influences, and they sleep. Busy people pass through the churchyard and look upon the sleepers generally with superior scorn, but sometimes they try to avert their faces with a pained look, as though they were accidentally made privy to a shameful thing. A telegraph boy enters the gateway whistling merrily, but stops suddenly and hurries through the sorry dormitory with a blush on his cheeks. A policeman stands motionless beside the church door, like a new kind of ecclesiastical symbolism; and a grey cat glides suspiciously among the sleepers.

I pass along unostentatiously, noting the seats and their occupants. On the first are three men—one an old man with a long beard yellow with neglect, and pale, gaunt cheeks; he sleeps like a child, his battered and greasy felt hat resting idly in his lap; next to him, his head resting upon his arm, which lies along the back of the seat, is a decently-clad young man with a face like a death-mask; and in the far corner a ruddy and hairy-faced tramp in ragged corduroys snoring luxuriously.

Farther along on the opposite side is another group of human wreckage. There are four here: three men, two of whom hang limply over the

## Torpor

arms at either end, and an old and wrinkled woman, sitting upright, and muttering in her sleep. Three women occupy the next seat; all are in rags and filth that shame the day. They are awake; two are talking listlessly, one adjusting her grotesquely dilapidated bonnet the while, with a pitifully automatic reminiscence of past coquetry. The third is a half-crazed creature of about thirty; her tangled black hair is streaked with grey; upon her feet are a pair of men's heavy boots, ridiculously broken and worn, and tied round the insteps with pieces of faded red rag; she wears a rent black skirt and a mangy blue woollen coat pinned together and open at the throat, showing a leaden, stringy neck, but no sign of any under-garment. She is eating a faded apple, and as I pass she leers inanely, and says with vindictive affability, "'Ere we are, sir, all a-blowin' and a-growin'."

So I pass on. Seat after seat, each with its scrap-heap of useless humanity, line the pathway; it is like walking through an avenue of the dead. Happily they sleep, a comfortless sleep, to be sure, but such as it is it brings partial oblivion. I can see only one other person awake. He is a hopeless man in shiny black, a decayed clerk, probably, and he turns over a bundle of soiled letters, characters, letters of recommendation, maybe, full of ironical praise of his virtues and capabilities. He, hopeless though he is, has obviously not yet given up hope—he is the one tragic figure of the place, because the sense of contest in him

# Torpor

is still alive; he alone amid all those derelict beings is conscious of the will to live.

The rest are alive, but dead: the will to live has flickered out of their consciousness; they are indifferent to all sense of contest, and the desire of conquest is no more; they have surrendered to circumstances in the unequal battle for bread, and lie here broken, useless, scrapped.

. . . . .

Why do they go on living? I wonder, as I turn from this human scrap-yard. Death is such a simple thing compared with this. Besides, they are indifferent to pain—ah, that is it. They are indifferent to pain, they no longer feel the pain of life, therefore they do not think of death. People who are happy or in pain think of death—the rest are dead.

. . . . .

Outside in High Street, Bloomsbury, an organ is playing Mr. Harry Lauder's song, "I know a Lassie," and a number of ragged but merry children are dancing. Up and down the pavement they go, shaking their skirts and kicking their heels like a mad rout of elves. They take up snatches of the chorus:

*"As sweet as the heather,  
The bonnie purple heather,  
Mary, my Highland belle,"*

and the bright-faced Italian woman who plays the organ smiles appreciatively as their shrill voices rise over the din of the street.

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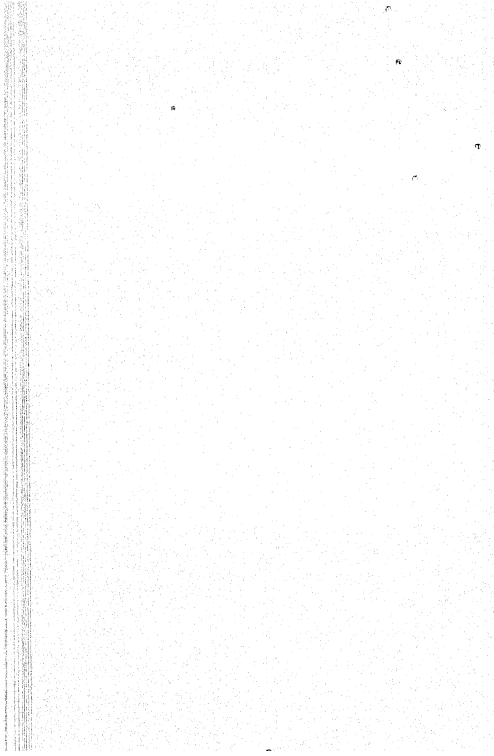
## Torpor

Suddenly the organ stops and the dancing ceases. Men remove their hats and look thoughtful. A funeral is passing. When it is out of sight the music begins again.

. . . . .

I cross the road towards Oxford Street, and before turning the corner I look back at St. Giles'. The silver-grey spire looks peaceful and beautiful in the sunny autumn noon. The policeman has walked out of the churchyard and he is "moving on" some derelicts who have been resting against the railings. I catch a last glimpse of the sleepers—the seats look like open graves, and I feel the whole of society is being affected by their decay. . . .

"Move along, there, move along," I can just hear the officer. But over the gateway of St. Giles' I see an unwritten legend: "Rubbish may be shot here."



## XXIII

### THE FIRE

(*Coal Strike—1912*)

THE newspaper fell to the floor, and I stretched my hands towards the little altar before me in which the coal burned red and purred like a cat inviting attention. I do not remember ever having looked so wistfully or so reverently at the fire; I do not remember ever having experienced quite the same sense of luxury in red glow and lapping flame. For my paper had filled me with a consciousness of impending doom; the altar was to be desecrated, the fire was to be put out. . . .

As one sits by the fire at ordinary times one appreciates the boon of brightness and warmth unconsciously, but in such a moment one's senses become acute as they do in the presence of death; the mind instinctively, yet consciously, throws back, as it were, traversing in a flash the long chain and interlaced experiences of the far-flung human line. The experiences of a myriad human beings covering a world of space and æons of time are crowded into such a moment. It is a moment of real passion, linking us with primal things, annihilating, as only passion can, everything but the essential thing, the very stuff of life; it is kin to all clean desire, brother to hunger and to love.

## The Fire

So I stretched my hands to the little altar on the hearth and drew into myself the red warmth of the glowing coals. I let it play along the conduits through which the red blood flows, and lap and caress the sensitive nerves until it set the brain aflame with adoration.

To return home and find the fire out, even if one has the means of kindling a blaze at will, is bad enough, but to return home to no fire and no fuel must be like descent into a tomb. The home clusters about the fire as our towns used to cluster about the church. Fire is not only warmth and comfort, it is everything that we are. The heart of the world is a ball of fire, and man is mighty not only because he is the child of fire, but because he has learnt how to wield the sword of flame—those very flames that flicker before me on the little altar of impending doom; the little sacrificial flames that dart and wave and beckon like the swords and bannerets of a holy cause; the little flames that provoke dreams to-day and may be only dreams to-morrow. But to-day they are there with a new reality, recalling me to their significance; genial, luxurious, powerful, inviting the sort of ecstasy which is ours only at such rare moments, but which wise animals, like the domestic cat, appreciate every day.

It may be that it is only a false alarm that I suffer, for men are weak; no one may put out the fire after all. It may be that our humble Titans will remain at their hazardous craft in the under world on the old conditions, winning the

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lustrous black mineral which is so much more precious than gold from its dark hiding-places as heretofore, and by so doing keep alight the only altars that in our time have any real devotees; it may be they will do this great service for such pitiful thanks and such small honour as they have been wont to receive. As this comforting thought broaches my mind, a little incandescent spear of light hisses at me through the bars, and I see that valley of the shadow, ironically called a coalfield, in all its majesty and might. I see the coalfield also become an altar, an altar of darkness translated into wild fury and red death, and I see these Titans who win the coal for the other altars, these masters of the modern world, devoured by their captive. . . . Yes, it may after all be a false alarm, and the light on the altars will not be put out, and I take the tongs and win from the urn beside the hearth a piece of the lustrous substance, the potential fire stuff as the Titans win it from the earth, and murmuring *Noblesse oblige!* I cast it into the flames.

Time was when men recognised the greatness of fire, when the spirit of flame warmed and illuminated their devotions. But in those days, although fire was a more intimate thing than it is to-day, it did not dominate their lives as it dominates the life of the modern world. We have almost forgotten how dependent we are upon fire, how the whole of our existence is warmed as we warm our hands at the glowing embers. Perhaps, however, our indifference has a subtler meaning



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than might be apparent at the first glance. Perhaps we have degraded fire by putting it to absurd and unnecessary uses. Fire in past ages had a simple and definite use: it was the means of protecting man as man against what to him was the blind fury of nature; without it he could never have maintained his right to exist. The cold would have conquered him, the wild beasts would have devoured him. Even to-day fire is engaged in the service of man as a weapon against inhuman powers, but we have turned it to other uses also, and to many futilities. Fire to-day, while providing us with our essential needs, provides us also with many things that we do not need, with many things that cumber the garden of life. Perhaps that is why it has fallen somewhat into disregard. That and the human habit of taking things for granted unless reminded of them continually by symbol and ceremony—or catastrophe. The Eskimo crouching over his tiny oil flame, the Zulu huddled before his flaming faggots in the night, is no less than we are in his final relationship with fire. . . . As I stretch my hands again to the little altar on the hearth, I become one with them. The ages roll away as the clouds roll out of the darkling sky, and give me in such a moment as this a clear vision of essential life. I see the essence of the human idea—a man crouching over a fire.

Probably as time goes on, and the monster falsely called progress rolls over the world, something other than the unrest of weary Titans will

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put out the fire. Already the friendly glow of the hearth-altar is disappearing. Triumphant materialism is conquering the fire by giving us the comfort of mere warmth. You can enter houses to-day that possess no flame. Radiators and hot-water pipes, electric currents and solemn anthracite casquets, dispel the cold but give no glow. It would seem that the last intimate and natural altar of mankind is doomed. The day may come when our homes shall possess no fire, and in that day we shall not go home, we shall prefer to live in hotels.

I believe in sitting by fires much more than I believe in progress, and it will be a solemn day for humanity when the red glow of burning fuel is no more. What have cheapness and cleanliness and convenience got to do with so sacred a thing? Let us leave such false advocacies to the profiteers and economists, and even if you do not I shall, for no one will ever induce me to sit before an asbestos stove or a stark electric radiator; it would be more than ridiculous—it would be irreverent. I have a suspicion that what one likes very much is right; and it will be found on consideration that one rarely has an imperative liking for anything which is not capable of being shared by practically the whole of humanity. It is our conceit, also common and human, which leads us to believe that our own personal likes and dislikes are unique. They are rarely anything of the sort: the human race is a much more closely related family than this conceit will permit

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us to admit, and to do a thing that we really like doing, imperatively, instinctively like doing, links us with the whole of humanity. And I believe my liking for fire, I believe it more particularly at this moment as I stretch my hands to the blaze, is shared by everyone of my kind. We human beings see things in the fire. To gaze into the glowing heat is to gaze into the light: the fire is our magic crystal. It helps us to see visions and to dream dreams. To put out the fire is to put out the light.

## XXIV

### IN THE SHADOWS

I HEARD it first in a café in the Strand. It was one of those large and generous and bright cafés where they serve light music and light refreshments at light prices. Afterwards it would ripple on my hearing in all sorts of places during the lunch-hour or dinner-time at hotels or restaurants, and during the entracte at the play. It was wafted at me a little incoherently from pianos in suburban villas as I passed on my way home. I heard itinerant musicians of all kinds, mandolinists, guitarists, piccoloists, and maestros of the tin whistle delighting the waiting theatre queues with its tripping melody in the early London night; and late revellers humming it after the theatre supper. In the summer, at the seaside the revolving crowd about the bandstand would halt mysteriously and expectantly as it began, and you could hear people whisper to each other eagerly, expectantly, agape with anticipation. And when I left England for a brief space I found that it had preceded me. In Paris it had taken the place of the weird notation of the *Danse des Apaches*, at La Rat Mort, and glasses clinked to it in the Olympia. A few days later I heard it flickering about a café in the Cannebiere

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at Marseilles. When I returned to London the street boys were whistling it. . . .

No more need be said, for street-boy recognition is the final tuft and applause of popularity. It is written that until a poet has been absorbed by the nation which produced him, he cannot be considered either a great poet or a success. Now *In the Shadows* is not a poem, although I am told some versions of it have been set to words. It is, I believe, what would be called a piece of music, and as such it has been absorbed, not only by the nation, but by Europe. No adventure in music has, to my knowledge, been received with such general acclamation since *Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay!* Although not even the most devoted admirers of that amazing work's successor could ever expect it to achieve the same renown, for long years after *Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay!* has passed into the limbo of half-remembered tunes, the street gamins of the cities of France are convinced that it is the English National Anthem. *In the Shadows* has achieved wide acclaim, but I doubt very much whether it will achieve the dazzling distinction of its earlier compeer in art.

The shadows entuned are rather stagey to my mind. Doubtless they are the shadows of delight. But hearing the name alone you might imagine the thing to be a treatise on the submerged tenth; something, perhaps, in the nature of an admonitory essay on slumming. Or, again, you might conclude that it had some relation to a work setting out to emulate the austere gloom of Edgar

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Allan Poe. But it is about neither of these things, the shadows are painted with pleasant colours, and I am told they dally with the thought of love. I am forced to admit, however, that they are a trifle too deep for me to see so much in them. On the contrary, I must confess that when I first heard the tune I thought it was about circus riders, but by the time it had reached the second movement I had come to the conclusion that it had something to do with quick lunches, or quick-step dancing, or anything that tripped about and fell over itself and kept smiling. You see I had not heard its name at that time, and it is always advisable to provide yourself with the name of a piece of modern music if you wish to prevent mistakes as to the composer's intention—or lack of it. As it finished, the friend beside me heaved a happy sigh and said "Ripping!" turning to me for a like expression of approval, for it is not pleasant to be forced to appreciate art in loneliness. Appreciation of art, to be really pleasurable, should be a concerted emotion, you should thrill and shout in company. Anyhow, I was in a good humour, having enjoyed the music without understanding it at all, as after events revealed; so I approved with an appreciative nod and an inquiry as to the name of the piece which had quite obviously thrown the café into a state of bubbling ecstasy. I was a little surprised when I was told. But my surprise was comforted with the thought that the title was but another example of the widespread modern fashion of

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paradox; and the composer had to call it something.

Art, although not necessarily didactic, has, in a sense, a lesson for everybody, although that lesson varies with the artist. I think *In the Shadows* may be taken as an example of the educational value of art. But the lesson it teaches is more or less elliptical; that is to say it does not directly tell you anything in particular, any more than it tells you to be good or attempts directly to inspire you to be the opposite of good. Rather does it prattle to you about the age in which you live and the people who inhabit that age. And the sort of impression you get of these people is that they would always prefer to whistle rather than to think; that they would always prefer the second best to the best, the semblance to the reality, prettiness to beauty, pathos to tragedy. But it is quite obvious the composer of the work had no such lesson in view when he created his popular masterpiece. I sometimes have a suspicion that he had no object in view at all when he created *In the Shadows*—it simply “grewed,” and he awoke one day and found it famous. I may be wrong, but that is what it sounds like, and I really see no reason why music or any other art-work should not be pursued along those lines. Indeed, a great deal of all artistic creation corresponds with automatic writing. Artists, although not backward in absorbing the appreciation they receive from themselves and others, often know not what they

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do. And the more honest of them know that they have not only themselves to thank: art is the love-child of chance. Chance may thus have been the cause of the song which has almost made Europe a nation, not a very impressive nation or a nation that matters very much, but still a nation—a nation that is becoming over-addicted to afternoon tea and cigarettes. Perhaps, after all, there is no paradox in the title, perhaps the composer named his music *In the Shadows* remembering its destiny and its destined appreciators, in an ironic mood. One of these days I shall try to find time to hunt him out and ask him. Who knows? He may be some wonderful yet unknown philosopher.

There is no doubt that the modern world lives in a shadowland of half-thought; it loathes conclusions of any kind, and that is why the popular art of the day is a light and ephemeral thing that neither satisfies nor denies. It just passes the time and prevents its devotees thinking or realising or doing anything beyond the immediate more or less mechanical moods of the hour. The same tripping prettiness and light fantasy which pervade *In the Shadows* pervade all our popular art. You see it particularly in musical comedy and in the picture papers, on picture postcards and in the picture theatres. A curiously artificial daintiness dominates all this kind of art, which is relieved only by a jerky humour, equally unsatisfying, although it does not fail to raise laughter of a kind. Nevertheless I



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believe this art to be the most important product of our day, because it is produced deliberately to satisfy the needs of a weary population. If you speak to people about their likes and dislikes in music or pictures or books, they will tell you that they do not want what they call "heavy stuff," they want something light or cheerful, something, as they will admit, that will take them "out of themselves." And in that admission we get very near to the essential weakness of our civilisation. Living is no longer sufficient in itself, and we are too tired to attempt achievements for ourselves. We just do our work without interest because we have to, and we are therefore forced to use all sorts of artistic narcotics to prevent our being bored with ourselves when we are not working. The existence of all this trivial and unsatisfying art, which begins anywhere and goes nowhere, means that tedium is the keynote of civilisation. The average man of to-day is not a citizen of a kingdom, he is a citizen of a boredom. We are tired with ourselves and the world because we insist upon the world being outside ourselves. It is as though we had lost appetite for all healthy food and desired nothing but confectionery. Our inner lives are bankrupt because we have bartered away the riches of thoughtful silence. Civilisation is in the shadows.

## XXV

# ON A CERTAIN ARRANGEMENT IN GREY AND BLACK

It was Whistler's desire that the public should look upon the picture of his mother as "An Arrangement in Grey and Black." But for many years the public hardly looked at the picture at all, save to wonder stupidly and to laugh, for it is no easy thing to change the taste of a generation, especially if that change involve a deeper vision of a familiar thing. Strange is it, however, that the mother-picture did not make an immediate appeal, for before all its subtleties of line and colour, before all those audacities of technique and composition, which Whistler, the craft-proud painter, delighted in springing upon the world of pictures, it reveals transcendent a simple, sacred thing: the beauty and mystery of motherhood. Perhaps the picture was not shown to the right sort of people. It was shown only to artists and the weary habitués of art galleries.

If that be so, it would not be fair to lay the entire blame of its early neglect at the door of the public. The experts rejected it, after the manner of experts face to face with something strange and strong. Artists and critics all, save a very few,

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saw no virtue in it. The authorities at the Royal Academy at first refused it wall space at their exhibition in 1872. Only one member of the Academy, Sir William Boxall, pleaded for its admission, and it was eventually hung to prevent the scandal of his resignation. The connoisseurs, as usual, did not know their own stupid business: a Strand art dealer priced it at one hundred pounds: it was exhibited in America and catalogued at twelve hundred dollars in 1884: it was hung at the Salon and received its first honour—a third-class medal. But France made amends by acquiring the masterpiece for the national collection in 1891, and by making Whistler an officer of the Legion of Honour, and the picture found a home on the walls of the Musée de Luxembourg. Fourteen years afterwards, by special decree of President Loubet, Whistler's portrait of his mother returned to England for a brief space to take its rightful place among the master's other great portraits at the Memorial Exhibition of his works arranged by the International Society of Sculptors, Painters, and Gravers, of which he was the first President, at the New Gallery.

Painters will always value the portrait as an arrangement in grey and black, and it was because Whistler was a painter that he wished the public to appreciate it in the same way. But he painted better than he understood the average man. Indeed, the average man was nothing to him. Whistler did not realise that in making this epic portrait of a mother, even though that mother

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was the mother who bore him, in limning with infinite art and love this particular arrangement in grey and black, he was trespassing upon common property. I say trespassing deliberately, for he wished to make private that mother-love which is common to all. Certainly it is true that those who look at the portrait have no invitation to pry into the artist's family affairs; but there is small need—for in painting his own love for his own mother, Whistler interpreted whatever of reverence an old and beloved mother has inspired or can inspire in any man.

Obviously, then, the portrait being what it is, he could not help telling us something of his own filial affection; but knowing his singularly self-centred character as a painter, and his love of paint as such, one does not wonder how he failed to realise that his portrait admitted the public into the sanctuary. Still less is one surprised that such a man as Whistler might fail to see that by a masterly expression of his own maternal veneration he was symbolising the mother-worship of all. He has, in short, admitted the world, at one and the same time, into his secret and into its own. We know now that Whistler did not see his mother only as an arrangement in grey and black, fitting though grey and black be for the closing years of a mother's reign; we know now that the arresting intensity of this picture, with its quiet nobleness, was Whistler's psalm to his mother. Elizabeth and Joseph Pennell, in their "Life of James MacNeill Whistler," have given

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us reverent glimpses of the relationship between mother and son. We can now picture the trim but kindly Puritan lady brooding over the young lives of her sons in America, in Russia, and in England; encouraging Jemmie in his drawing, caring for his unstable health, half-willingly reproving his whims. Jemmie was excitable and delicate, therefore he came under her more intimate care. "I prefer this gentlest of my boys to go with me," she wrote in her diary.

Little glimpses have we also in this diary, of the Whistler yet to be, of Whistler the critic and Whistler the scoffer. Once the boys were taken through the Czar's palace at Peterhof, and they were shown some pictures by Peter the Great. "There are some fine pictures," writes the mother in her diary, "but Peter's own paintings of the feathered race ought to be most highly prized, though our Jemmie was so saucy as to laugh at them." Did she realise then that "our Jemmie," gentlest of her boys, would live to compile "The Gentle Art of Making Enemies"? But, best of all, we now know that Whistler the *poseur*, that Whistler of the white lock, the dandy—yes, if you will, the coxcomb—was not the whole Whistler, not, indeed, the real Whistler. The portrait tells us that plainly enough; Whistler's portrait of his mother is also a portrait of Whistler. It is a revelation of the boy become man, the boy who, on his tenth birthday, slipped a poem under his mother's plate for a surprise at breakfast. "I shall copy it," she wrote, "that he may be

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reminded of his happy childhood when perhaps his grateful mother is not with him."

Throughout the whole of his life Whistler showed deep reverence for his mother. He corresponded with her regularly when they were apart, and, when she left Chelsea, where the portrait was painted, for Hastings, where she lived until her death, she was in constant touch with her famous son. He visited her as often as he could, and she followed his sparkling career with deep, if perhaps bewildered, interest. For it must not be forgotten that she was a Puritan, and that she had all the reservations of the quietist temperament. The life of an artist was not the sort of life she would have chosen for her son, even though she encouraged and admired his gift for drawing when he was a boy, and it may easily be imagined how she marvelled at the pranks of Whistler the Butterfly with a sting in its tail. But none knew so well as she did that that Whistler was created specially for the outside world. The real Whistler never appeared before the public; the rich inner life of the man who could create the "Arrangement in Grey and Black," the "Carlyle," and the nocturnes, etchings, and lithographs, was reserved for the few intimate friends, chief of whom was his mother. Whistler's portrait of his mother is high comment upon that great friendship.

It is difficult to imagine how any man could fail to see the beauty and the significance of Whistler's portrait of his mother. Indeed there must be

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very few nowadays who cannot appreciate this masterpiece at its full worth. The thousands of tourists who troop past the original in the Luxembourg Gallery testify to its popularity among a vast and varied number of people who for two decades have ranked it with the Venus de Milo, Notre Dame and La Sainte Chapelle, and the other popular art treasures of Paris. Yet for a picture to become a "sight" is no sign of the deeper appreciation of art. With the Mother, however, it is different; its popularity is, I hope, due to a finer feeling than idle curiosity. Those who stand before this picture become part of a symphony of feeling which embraces the whole world. They feel instinctively that they are in the presence of a sacred thing, not only motherhood, holy and sacred as that is—for every true mother is a Madonna—but of aged motherhood, of the last phase—the twilight of motherhood, with all its tragic sense of lonely accomplishment. Life itself is tragic and ironic, but the tragedy of life finds its supreme expression in the twilight of motherhood, at that hour when the mother-mind recalls the past and the present—her children, their arrival, their need of her through long, long years, and then, needing her no longer, their departure. In this last lies the irony of motherhood, for a mother never realises that her children are no longer children.

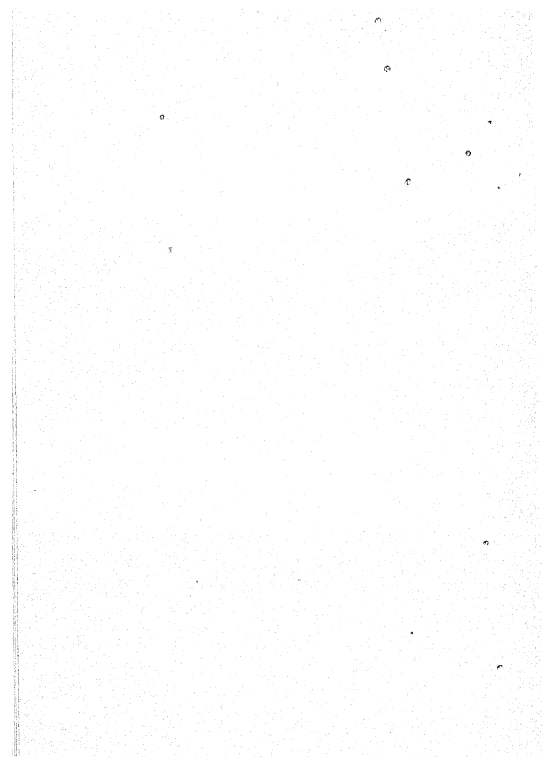
I see all this and much more in Whistler's picture. But, it may be urged, Whistler did not mean that I should see these things; he resented

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the obtrusion of ideas in painting. I cannot say what Whistler's intention was; perhaps even he did not know. As an artist he was intent upon his arrangement in grey and black; but we know also that as a man and a son he was painting his mother. It was not often that he would acknowledge the sentiment of his work, but once he did admit to a friend that "one does like to make one's mummy just as nice as possible."

It was this human side of the picture which made Carlyle agree to sit to Whistler, and we may be sure that the mystic dignity of that little womanly figure, with its serene yet wistful eyes, its beautiful, resigned hands resting amid a little crushed old lace, took back the aged philosopher's mind to remote days in far-away Ecclefechan, just as it may recall every one to the eternal need and the eternal rejection of the mother.





## CONCERNING PERSONALITIES

ALL books save those which subserve some fact, such as, say, ferro-concrete or the migration of swallows or the differential calculus, and even, perhaps, those also, are about persons. The best books are about one person—the author. I have yet to meet the writer, or any kind of artist, who has other interests. The test of an artist lies in his power of attracting attention to himself, for by doing so he aids others in the same pleasant occupation in reference to themselves. Most people will deny this. They prefer to assert their interest in things, in ideas, in persons, men, women, and children, races and castes, and, whilst such an assertion is far from being untrue, it is not the whole truth. It is a kind of truth—possibly the truth that passeth understanding—and I am not one to deny that it is a very good kind of truth, meet for dwellers on the edge of mystery, fair currency for those who have no desire to spend themselves in argument. But behind the truth that passeth understanding (which is an impossible proposition, for no one can get behind it) argumentative persons might, for purposes of discussion, affix labels, as it were, indicating starting points and directions for more argument. (Let us remember that man lives not by bread alone.)

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Such an imaginary label would I affix to this question of self-interest. It would suggest that men are preoccupied with others for the sake of personal comparison. Whenever we appreciate another person we compare him unconsciously with ourselves. He is what we are or imagine we are, and so ensures self-confidence; he is not what we are nor what we wish to be, and so feeds conceit; or he is what we would be, and so encourages emulation, despair, and many other things good, bad, or just futile, according to idiosyncrasy. Such an argument explains somewhat our remarkable interest in all that pertains to personality.

Habit and custom generally belie themselves when it comes to those half-admitted and often wholly unadmitted preferences which exist deep down in the consciousness of each one of us. We are not what we claim to be, any more than we are what we seem to be; we are what we are, and the only proof of our validity as factors in the game of life is to be found in the reality of our personal tastes. These go back to the beginnings of us and everything, and, deny them as often as we may, they always remain the final indications, primitive and eternal, and the only things of more than passing interest to us or to others. It has been found convenient in social life to discourage the complete logical expression of whim, for all really personal preferences are whims, otherwise the clash of over-insistent personality would make the thing we call society an impossibility. But, being human, and often very human, there

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is little doubt that we have gone further in our discouragement than was either advisable or intended. The result is that the expression of personality, as a sign of variety, is probably less obvious among civilised people to-day than ever it was. We have grown shy of personal differences, within more or less loosely defined classes, even where they are permitted, with the result that similarity and uniformity, rather than variety, are becoming habits. In essentials, however, despite it being bad form to express decided preferences or convictions, or to make what are known as personal remarks about others, we are all obviously interested in personalities and the strong convictions of others. The distinguished person is a cult, emphatic statement, in art and ideas, a fashion. And just as there are people who devote their spare time to collecting ideas which are so new and strange as to have an exaggerated importance, so too there are others, and these are the majority, who might be said to collect those exaggerated personalities known as eminent men. The pastime is sometimes called "lionising," and, although a healthy and keen sense of humour keeps the habit within the bounds of seemliness in this country, in some countries, particularly in the United States, it has become shameless convention. Personal distinction of any kind is there received with a rapturous adoration which has small reference to the thing achieved by the adored one. In England it is different; we like to waylay eminent and distin-

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guished persons and to look at them (we will sometimes pay for the privilege), but we nearly always end by laughing at them.

Perhaps abnormal inquisitiveness about outstanding personalities is a reaction from the monotony of personal uniformity. We grow weary of the sameness of the marching army, in spite of its swing and dash, and find ourselves involuntarily waiting for the officers to pass. Such an interest in personality is probably negative in effect. But there is an interest in personality which is almost as widespread, but far more intimate in bearing and effect. It reveals itself in the affectionate regard we have for the personal note in literature. All literature is, in one and a very real sense, the transmutation of personality into words, but there is a kind of literature which is more distinctly personal than literature in general. It is the literature of intimate, personal revelation; the literary expression of the whole man and not merely a part of him, or a single attitude which most endears itself to readers of such books. One recalls the names of their writers with much the same sort of affection that one has for intimate friends: Charles Lamb, Montaigne, Sir Thomas Browne, Walt Whitman, Thoreau, Edward Fitzgerald, and a few more, but only a very few, for such writers must not only have the power of transmuting their personalities into enduring phrases and sentences: they must have personalities which in themselves are delightful. But even in those cases where charm

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of personality does not exist, the translation of unlikeable natures into literature is interesting. One of the first qualities of all good writing is, then, the infusion of words with the stuff of personality, with those qualities which distinguish a writer from the rest of humanity, which show him, if only for a moment, for what he is, so that we may the more surely realise how he stands to us and we to him. People may be interested in ideas, in social progress towards definite ends, in research, and in many other things, but underlying all these interests, and far away and beyond every one of them, they are interested in personality. Consciously and unconsciously we are all intensely curious about each other, whether or not that curiosity is but the prelude to interest in self, as I believe it is, and in a way all profoundly interesting literature is in the nature of gossip. Perhaps the explanation is to be found in that eternal searching for unity which would seem to underlie so much of human interest in life, for every human desire is a paradox, and if man wishes above all things to discover and express himself, he desires above everything to do this through others.

Man is a gregarious animal, striving to be social. It is not enough that he herds in cities and societies: that would satisfy the animals, but man has, in addition to the consciousness of animals, the self-consciousness of the human being, and this last makes mutual inquisitiveness inevitable. We cannot bear the idea of separation; if we are

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marooned we go mad, and the subtlest form of punitive torture in our prison system is solitary confinement. But in modern life we have so many opportunities of satisfying the more clamant and obvious of our gregarious needs that the mind goes forth, wandering in search of quiet and more intimate associations. Art provides these, when they cannot be found within one's own mind, which is the first place where one should look for them. But in spite of this human need of community, there have always been people who have desired to be independent of others and capable of living socially with none but themselves and their own dreams, ideas, and fancies. In recent years some people of this type, which produces the extremes of anchorite and despot, have sought to formulate a doctrine of militant personalism. Philosophic egoism has, of course, always existed in one form or another, but the new egoism is far from being academic; on the contrary, it laughs at all theories which will not stand the test of personal practice. The modern philosophic egoist is avowedly dynamic; he believes in action, in living his philosophy and practising his idealism. That is very right: it is important that we should be ourselves, especially in an age like the present, when the majority of people are content to live second-hand lives. But I doubt very much whether you can be yourself by deliberately setting out with that object in view. The man who is over-anxious about being himself generally ends in being somebody else. We have had many

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instances of the sort of thing in the advanced circles which receive inspiration from the works of Ibsen, Bernard Shaw, and Friedrich Nietzsche. The devoted egoists of those entertaining coteries have so enthusiastically abandoned themselves to the dicta of their philosophic heroes, have so insisted upon themselves in accordance with the principles laid down by their masters, that they have ended by becoming nothing more than irritating echoes. There is no royal road to personal expression. Emerson's command—"Insist on yourself!"—is all very well, but not quite so easy as it seems. The ego is a very elusive quantity, and a search for it is like searching for the pea beneath the Fakir's thimble, or the Queen in the three-card trick of the English racecourse; it is there, to be sure, but so uncertainly there that its very existence is a menace and a snare. Nevertheless there is little doubt that Emerson's ideal of self-reliance gets very near the heart of the matter, and it anticipates those theories of intuition which are the basis of the more fashionable philosophy of Henri Bergson. A safer guide in such matters, however, is Walt Whitman, but not so much as a personal force himself, or a tracer of personal force in others, as the advocate of the negation of leadership of any kind, even his own. He who would be my disciple, he says in effect, must first learn how to destroy the master. There, I think, we get the common sense of the utility of personality. Discipleship is permissible, but only as a guide,



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an indicator: for at the end of all discipleship is the cause of oneself. Perhaps, after all, personality reveals itself when we act not so much because of ourselves as by ourselves; when we are so interested in the thing we do, or the life we live, that self is forgotten. But whatever the cause or the effect of personal force, it is quite clear that mere endeavour after personal expression for its own sake is futile. Personality is shy of all doctrine, and the only way to cultivate it is to forget about it.

But at the same time there are legitimate grounds for curiosity about oneself; and the question is not so much how to abolish personal self-concern, as how to utilise, how to direct it, and how to inform it with seemliness and practical power. It is not, however, my intention to propagate a doctrine or to seek converts to a point of view; my desire is merely to indicate a process in the psychology of personality. And I fancy that process is to be seen most clearly at work in the sphere of criticism. Criticism is the art of comparing the ideas and actions of others with one's own, and whether it be personal or impersonal it is always in the nature of a confession of self on the part of the critic. Some critics have been fully conscious of this natural outcome of their art. The well-known words of Anatole France will come readily to the mind. "As I understand it," he says, "and as you allow me to practise it, criticism, like philosophy and history, is a sort of romance, and all romance, rightly taken, is an

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autobiography. The good critic is he who narrates the adventures of his own mind among masterpieces." This incomparable French writer reveals himself in those words quite as truly as he reveals the essential charm of the critical faculty, for no criticism has charm unless it spring from some such basis. Anatole France reveals even the *savant* and the Member of the Institute of France by his insistence on masterpieces, which need not necessarily be the concern of critics as such.

That conscious master of subjective criticism probably came nearer the true meaning of the function of criticism when he said: "The highest criticism really is, the record of one's own soul. It is more fascinating than history, as it is concerned simply with oneself. It is more delightful than philosophy, as its subject is concrete and not abstract, real and not vague. It is the only civilised form of autobiography, as it deals not with events, but with the thoughts of one's own life; not with the life's physical accidents of deed or circumstance, but with the spiritual moods and imaginative passions of the mind. I am always amused by the silly vanity of those writers and artists of our day who seem to imagine that the primary function of the critic is to chatter about their second-rate work. The best that one can say of most modern creative art is that it is just a little less vulgar than reality, and so the critic, with his fine sense of distinction and sure instinct of delicate refinement, will prefer to look into the silver mirror or through the woven veil, and will

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turn his eyes away from the chaos and clamour of actual existence, though the mirror be tarnished and the veil be torn. His sole aim is to chronicle his own impressions. It is for him that pictures are painted, books written, and marble hewn into form." There is no reason why the critic should not seek adventure among accredited masterpieces, and on the other hand there is no reason why he should. Anything may set one off on the adventure of criticism; it may be a masterpiece, and often is a masterpiece; but it matters not whether the thing be best or least of its kind, the critic reveals himself in approval as well as in disapproval, and in the final resort masterpieces do not exist for him save among his own preferences. That is if we take the critic as one who concerns himself only with works of art, but such critics are only a class. Criticism is, at one time or another, practised by all of us, and we are to be known by our judgments upon men and things, for in every judgment a man judges himself if he has judged freely, or the canons of the law, if he has judged by legal prescription.

For the present such things are beside the question. Suffice it to say, then, that we reveal ourselves in our appraisal of others. There is more of Samuel Johnson in the "Lives of the Poets" than of Savage, Tickell, Yalden, Gay, Denham, Roscommon, Pope, Milton, and the rest, and Boswell reveals at least as much if not more of himself in the "Life of Johnson" as he does of his subject. When Ernest Renan writes about

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Jesus, he writes about Renan, as surely as Carlyle tells us about himself throughout the history of "The French Revolution." Thackeray interprets himself in the "Book of Snobs" and we leave Charles Lamb's dissertations on old china, old dramatists, poor relations, and roast sucking pig, knowing far more of Charles Lamb than of any of the tiresome themes which his rare personality makes entertaining. Some writers grow tired of writing about themselves, *apropos* of historical subjects and personalities; for instance, when Walter Pater grew tired of holding himself up for contemplation by means of literary portraits labelled "Joachim du Bellay" and "Leonardo da Vinci," he turned to the imaginary portrait, and in "Marius the Epicurean" revealed a conception of himself much as Michael, Lord of Montaigne, revealed himself in "An Apologie of Raymond Sebond." Modesty thus enforces upon such writers the methods of the novelist, the best of whom have discussed themselves in their novels with only a little more circumlocution than Walter Pater or Montaigne in their imaginary portraits and essays. And in a like manner one may show that practically the whole of literature is personal expression, intense or superficial, morbid or healthy, frank or veiled curiosity about self and its bearings and aspects.

The non-literary person is equally involved in this prevailing need of expression. But he rarely avows his need, and so, to hide anything that might suggest immodest conceit, he follows the



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line of least resistance by furtively appraising himself at the shrine of others. A man is known by the company he keeps; he is also known by the company he does not keep; and an age like ours, which lives largely by proxy, limiting the average power of personal expression, must set up idols of exaggerated personality, which act as public reservoirs from which all may drink. The average man of to-day drinks long draughts from these reservoirs and is not appeased. Is it possible that he is wrong in accepting what is public instead of what is intimate? I am inclined to think so, and, whilst not wishing to underestimate the undeniable importance of a lively and jolly public life, it would seem that personality at its best needs other means of expression. It is far better, for instance, to know a man by his work than by his habits, for in your valuation of that you arrive at your true destination. An approval, an appreciation, adds something to your personality, by the very act of stating a preference. It not only tells you where you are, it tells others. Nevertheless, curiosity about our fellows does indicate that we are awake; but curiosity is not an end in itself; it is a means, an experience, building character, which is power, or destroying it. And any inquisitiveness about others, be they artists or mechanics, craftsmen or drudges, which does not refresh us by a new point of view, give a new sense of wonder, or act as a tonic to the soul, is so much waste energy.